Spring 2007

SMALL FARM QUARTERLY

Good Living and Good Farming – Connecting People, Land, and Communities

Photo by John Thurgood

Feature Articles

Supplement to Country Folks

SMALL FARM QUARTERLY - SPRING 2007

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Valley View Farm in Bloomville, NY. Photo by John Thurgood

SMALL FARM QUARTERLY

Good Farming and Good Living — Connecting People, Land, and Communities

Small Farm Quarterly is for farmers and farm families — including spouses and children - who value the quality of life that smaller farms provide.

OUR GOALS ARE TO:
- Celebrate the Northeast region's smaller farms;
- Inspire and inform farm families and their supporters;
- Help farmers share expertise and opinions with each other;
- Increase awareness of the benefits that small farms contribute to society and the environment.
- Share important research, extension, and other resources.

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Cornell Small Farms Program Update

NY BEGINNING FARMER PROJECT AWARDED TWO GRANTS

The Small Farms Program, along with a Leadership Team of ten Cornell Cooperative Extension Educators, has been awarded a NY Farm Viability Grant to develop resources and networks to help aspiring farmers anywhere in NY get the assistance they need for start-up and long-term success. This includes creating a new website with downloadable information and structured learning modules, an educator-led online course, collaboration on regional trainings, packages of recommended curricula and training templates for Ag Educators, and one-on-one business planning assistance for serious new farmers. Please contact Erica Frenay at ejf5@cornell.edu or 607-255-9911 if you have questions or would like to be involved in any way in this project.

CORNELL STUDENTS EXPLORE THE SMALL FARM DREAM

This spring the Small Farms Program is offering, for the second time, a one-credit course for Cornell students called "Exploring the Small Farm Dream." We have an enthusiastic group of nineteen students, up from 12 last year, who meet weekly to hear from farmers and other resource people about the opportunities and challenges of starting a small farm business. We're really pleased with the high level of student interest, and have made the decision to continue offering the class on a yearly basis. We are also looking into the possibility of additional small-farm-focused classes that might be offered in the future.

NY WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE NETWORK LAUNCHED

On Jan. 13, a group of interested women met in Geneva, NY to discuss the formation of a Women in Agriculture network for NY. Fueled by inspiration from other Women in Ag networks in PA, ME, and VT, these women discussed the benefits they hoped to achieve: inspiration, mentoring, learning in a comfortable environment, friendships, and information sharing. The women at this meeting expressed strong interest in seeing local chapters form in regions all over the state, wherever there are clusters of interested women.

The group has a new email listserv to stay in touch statewide and share information about events, resources, challenges, and successes. To join the list, please visit http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/NYag-women and click on the button that says "Join this Group." You may need to acquire a free yahoo ID in order to join. If you are interested in being part of a women's network in your area, or in hosting or organizing a workshop or farm tour for women, please Susan Neal at sneal@corning-cc.edu or 607-535-2135.

SFP's JOANNA GREEN JOINS THE RANKS OF BEGINNING FARMERS

Well, do two heifer calves and a lot of big ideas make a farmer? Whatever your definition of farmer, Joanna is proud to announce the arrival of Betty and Margrethe and the completion of their plastic high tunnel "barn" in early March. Margrethe is a Dexter, while Betty is a Randall, a breed on the "critical" list of the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy. Joanna's plans include value-added dairy products – on an extremely small scale!

TWO NEW PUBLICATIONS

In preparation for our Small Farms Summit in November of 2006, we compiled a booklet listing dozens of Cornell Small Farms Research and Education Resources, highlighting some of the many programs and research projects conducted by Cornell and Cornell Cooperative Extension for the benefit of small farms in New York State. The booklet includes brief descriptions and contact information for projects ranging from horticulture, livestock and dairy to agroforestry, business management and marketing. There is a section devoted to organic agriculture and another for Integrated Pest Management research and extension.

Small Farms Program 2000-2006 Report: Enhancing Research, Extension & Leadership in Support of NY's Smaller Farms. If you've ever wondered about the scope of what the Small Farms Program actually does, this brief but information-packed report details our accomplishments since the program was started six years ago. Learn more about how the Small Farms Program got started, our outreach efforts and publications, and our research and extension projects.

Both publications are available online at www.smallfarms.cornell.edu, or call for a print copy, 607-255-9227.

WORKSHOPS

We've organized and/or co-sponsored lots of events this winter, including:

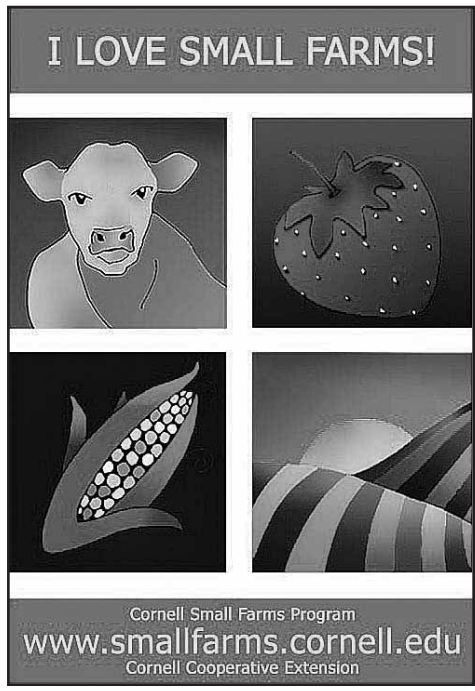
- The Food Less Traveled Conference in Owego
- The Family Farming Conference in Geneva
- The NYS Organic Dairy Task Force meeting in Syracuse
- The NY Women in Agriculture organizing meeting in Geneva
- Managing for Success for Organic Dairies workshops in Oneonta
- Joel Salatin seminar at Cornell University
- Cultivating the Next Generation of Dairy Farmers in Dryden
- Graze-a-Palooza Grazing Extravaganza in Hamilton

WANT MORE INFO?

For more information about Cornell's Small Farms Program and lots of other small farm topics, visit our website at www.smallfarms.cornell.edu. You can also sign up to receive our monthly email newsletter, Small Farms Update, by sending an email to Laura Harthan at lbh25@cornell.edu. Please provide your name, farm name, postal address, and county.

GET YOUR SMALL FARMS T-SHIRT

Perfect for gifts, perfect for you! Beige organic cotton t-shirts with colorful graphic, shown here, on front. Adult S,M,L, XL are $15; kids' size L available for $12. To order contact Joanna Green at 607-255-9227 or jg16@cornell.edu.



STEWARDSHIP & NATURE

Global Warming

It's happening. How will it affect the way you farm?

by Craig Cramer

With record warm temperatures last December – and spring-like weather lingering into early January – many people have started thinking about how global warming will affect their farms.

"In the future, chances are good we will see more warm winters like this one," says David Wolfe, a scientist in Cornell University's Department of Horticulture. Wolfe is studying how climate change, caused in part by increasing carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, is affecting agriculture in the Northeast.

"We may still have some very cold winters," says Wolfe. "But all the climate models point to a warming trend, and nature is already responding to the warmer conditions."

In the Northeast, lilacs are blooming four days earlier on average than they did in the 1960s, Wolfe points out. Warmer temperatures are also affecting cultivated crops like grapes (blooming six days earlier) and apples (blooming eight days earlier). These examples are just the tip of the iceberg in the mounting evidence that the climate is warming.

Studying long-term climate trends can't pinpoint what the weather will be like next week or next winter. But Wolfe details what farmers and gardeners can expect as the Northeast climate warms over the long haul:

Warmer winters may allow you to grow some crops or varieties that before could only grow in milder climes. The upstate New York wine grape industry, which relies on varieties that are only marginally cold-hardy in that region, may benefit from warmer winters.

On the other hand, aggressive weeds and invasive plants will also move north as the climate warms. Studies show those species are better equipped than crops to take advantage of the increasing carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere that are driving warming, notes Wolfe.

Pests and diseases that were held in check by the cold may become more of a problem. Lifecycles of beneficial insects may get out of synch with the pests they help control.

Natural ecosystems will shift north, with oak-pine forests replacing maple-beech-birch forests in some places, for example.

Less reliable winter snow cover may hurt overwintering of some perennial crops.

Hotter summers may cause heat stress even in warm-season crops such as tomatoes.

It's uncertain if weather variability will increase along with temperatures. But most models predict fewer but more concentrated precipitation events, causing more flooding and drought.

Adapting to a changing climate may mean choosing better-adapted varieties or shifting planting dates. But some changes may be more involved, such as installing irrigation or drainage systems. "Everyone is going to have to invest some to respond to climate changes," says Wolfe.

Signs of warming in the Northeast: Fruit trees like these tart cherries are flowering earlier in spring. Compared with the 1960's, apples are flowering eight days earlier and grapes six days earlier.

What should you do? Wolfe suggests starting with some win-win strategies that benefit both farmers and the environment:

Conserve energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Lower energy costs can lead to higher profits while you minimize your own contributions to global warming.

Increase soil organic matter. This improves soil health and productivity, helping plants cope with drought, floods and other stresses. Organic matter is mostly carbon converted by plants from carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. So you're reducing greenhouse gases while you improve your soil.

Use nitrogen fertilizer more efficiently. Synthetic nitrogen fertilizers are energy-intensive to produce, transport and apply. The more nitrogen fertilizer you apply, the more nitrous oxide (a greenhouse gas) your soil emits.

Sell energy to the expanding renewable energy market. Consider using marginal land to grow biomass fuels or generate electricity from the wind.

For more information, visit: *www.climateandfarming.org.*

Craig Cramer is Communications Specialist with Cornell's Department of Horticulture.

MANAGING RISK

Make New Ventures Less Risky - Part 1

Whether starting from scratch or just starting a new enterprise, it pays to reduce risks.

By Molly Ames

Editor's note: This article is part of a series focusing on risk management funded by the New York Crop Insurance Education Program under the Risk Management Agency (USDA) and the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets.

Managing risk is especially important if you're starting a new venture on your farm, investing in changes so that your children can farm, or taking the plunge and starting a new farm of your own from scratch.

I've been fortunate to work with many farmers who have successfully started new ventures – some from the ground up. We can learn a lot from folks who have survived those first few tough years. Here's some sound advice from those who have been there and lived to tell about it. (Look for more in Part 2 of this article in the Summer 2007 issue of Small Farm Quarterly.)

At Rivermede Farm, Rob Hastings avoids financial risk by avoiding debt. "We don't invest in anything we can't pay cash for, says Hastings. "If you don't borrow, it is hard to get into too much trouble."

Photo by Molly Ames

CLARIFY YOUR MOTIVES

Very few people buy a farm, purchase equipment and/or livestock and begin the rough-and-tumble job of agriculture with the intention of losing money on the endeavor. Farming is hard work, and no one wants to work that hard just to lose money.

But farming is about more than money, and you need to examine your other motives so they don't cloud your decisions. "Decide why you are doing it. Is it so you can justify doing what you love to do?" asks Nancey Brackett, who started her own equine business in Canton, N.Y., that offers boarding, riding lessons and a tack store.

If you are interested in getting into the equine business, Nancey suggests asking yourself, "Are you doing it just to have people to ride with? Or is this a career and you expect an income?" How you answer is important to your planning process. Nancey's story is pretty typical. She started with a few horses and added more. Then she found she needed to invest in an indoor arena in order to charge more for boarding. The years went by and she found she had a full-time job on her hands.

Nancey was able to make the business pay for itself, but her family lived on non-farm income. She managed to break even doing something she loved. But if she had been depending on the equine business to pay for family expenses, she would have had to plan and grow the business differently to be successful.

There can be – and often are – motives for going into a farm business other than profit. But it's important to be clear and intentional about your reasons before you start. Just like investing in mutual funds or the stock market, you and your family need to know how much you can afford to risk, and understand how risk-averse you are. This will help guide your decision-making.

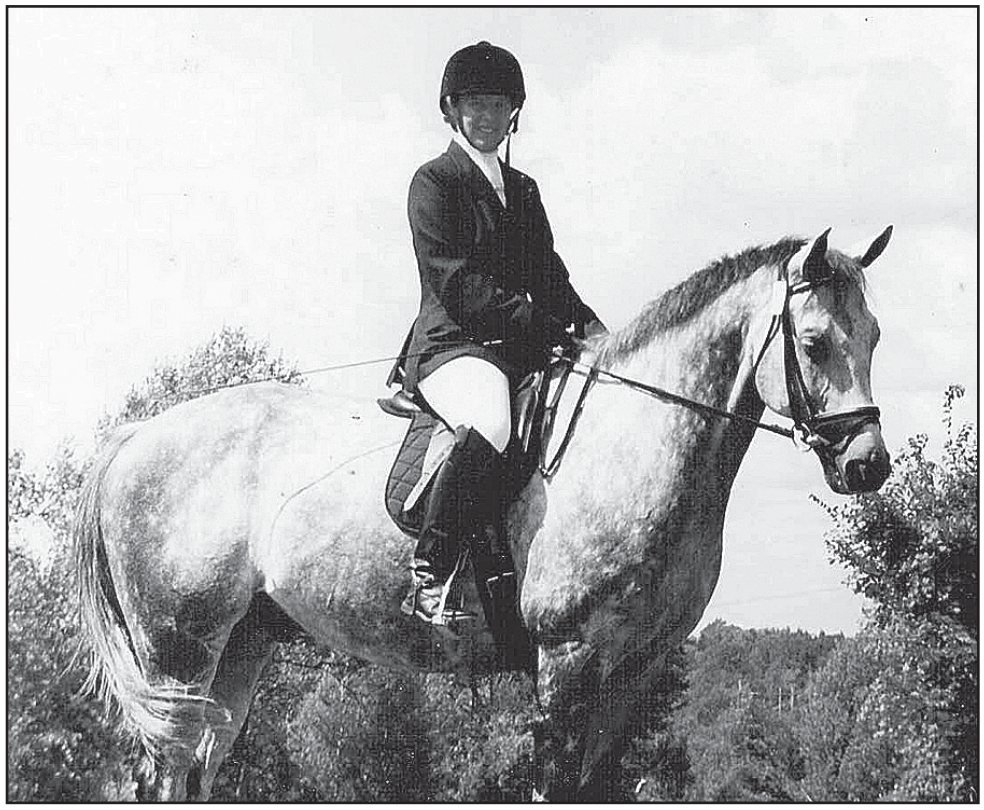
BE PREPARED

Once you are into farming or a new venture, you will find yourself dealing with things that you never dreamed you'd have to deal with. But you can keep the surprises manageable by doing research ahead of time. Talk to people who have launched similar ventures and develop a support network of people you can turn to for advice.

Attend seminars and conferences for both the formal and informal learning opportunities they afford. Take lots of road trips to attend field days and visit similar operations. You will get ideas and make contacts that will prove to be invaluable once you get started. You won't eliminate the rough spots to come. But you'll know better what you're getting into and have people you can turn to when you need help.

And it's not just about production. Sometimes you need to seek out learning opportunities that are out of the ordinary. For Pat Kilcoyne, who raises Black Angus and runs Kilcoyne Farms from a 200-acre farmstead near Brasher Falls, N.Y., that meant attending a meat-cutters' workshop so that he could talk knowledgeably with chefs about his direct-marketed beef.

"I had to do a lot of reading, and I had to learn to talk with people who come from different backgrounds than mine," recalls Pat, a third-generation farmer. Learning people skills has helped his direct-marketing efforts. He feels he's better prepared to read people and adjust his style accordingly. "You have to have thick skin and have confidence in yourself. Don't give up when you are told no."



Nancey Brackett turned her love of horses into her own equine business.

Photo courtesy Nancey Brackett

HAVE A PLAN

Studies show that successful small businesses do more planning than failed ones. But there's always a temptation to take shortcuts. "If you have farmed before, you think you don't need to do the formal planning that newbies should do," says Liz Bawden. Ten years ago, she and Brian, her husband, decided to move to northern New York from Canada, where they could not afford to buy quota for their dairy and were getting less for their milk than it cost them to produce it. Today they run a 50-cow certified organic dairy in Hammond, N.Y.

In Liz and Brian's case, economic necessity fueled their move and new business start-up. They had to get out of the situation they were in, and in order to do that they were willing to move mountains.

Still, they were reluctant to do formal business planning. But they needed a plan to secure bank loans. In addition to the bankers, they were faced with people in their path who needed to understand their intentions. They had to prove their commitment to the new business, and that meant a formal plan.

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

If you're getting into farming (or a new farm enterprise), you have to be willing to deal with the unexpected. Equine business owner Nancey Brackett is only half joking when she says she wants to write a book about her early years. She has a veritable laundry list of "What do you do when ___?"

Some are laughable but all are very real: What do you do when a boarder's horse gets colic on New Year's Day and they are out of town and you have to walk the horse for hours? What do you do when you are using straw for bedding and you have a boarder's horse that loves to eat straw? Or what if you have a boarder who wants to bring their kids and their pets when they ride? Do you let them introduce that liability risk to your farm?

Farm businesses can be fun when everything goes well. But success has much to do with how you anticipate and deal with the unexpected.

LEARN FROM MISTAKES

Everything that does go wrong in the course of business is a learning opportunity. Risk is not something that is to be avoided at all costs. Your planning process needs to measure the potential impact of risk ahead of time and protect against that risk where possible. But when things don't go as planned, you need to reflect on what actually happened, what went right, what went wrong, and why.

Pat Kilcoyne, who sells his grass-fed beef to chefs in the Lake Placid area, puts it like this: "I am not afraid of making mistakes as long as I learn from them. I figure it is the cost of my education. I just have to be sure I can afford the tuition.

"You have to be willing to make small-scale mistakes," he adds. "Learn from them, relook at them and ask 'Why?' I try to come up with 3 main points as to why it did not work and see if it can be tweaked."

"If you have farmed before, you think you don't ned to do the formal planning that newbies should do," says Liz Bawden (right). But a formal plan helped her and her husband Brian show bankers and others that they were committed to organic dairying.

INVEST CAREFULLY

"I subscribe to the 'trickle up' economic theory of investment," is the way Rob Hastings explains his risk-averse philosophy about taking on financial risks. Rob sells fruits, vegetables, maple products, honey, wool, Christmas wreaths, and flowers locally from his Rivermede Farm, in Keene Valley, N.Y.

"We don't invest in anything we can't pay cash for. If you don't borrow, it is hard to get into too much trouble. It may take longer to grow the business this way but it is safer."

Beef producer Pat Kilcoyne takes a less-strict approach. When he decided that it was time to borrow money to expand the business, he formalized his business plan to make sure that taking out a loan wouldn't be too risky. He enlisted the help of a consultant to help formulate the plan, which evaluated three options in terms of profit, cash flow, risk and time to execute.

"I have always been a pencil pusher," observes Pat. "But having a more formal plan done made us realize what we are spending, and what it would cost to make the next move. It forced us to look at the whole picture versus one transaction at a time. It educated me a lot on how plans are done and the value of them."

Virtually all of the farmers I've worked with developing new farm businesses expect that their investments of time, money and energy will return something to their checkbooks. But they also realize that it takes time to see profits from their investments. All have specific criteria and priorities for where they want to invest their money.

Pat bases his decisions heavily on what will reduce labor. "Everything I do now around here I do with the idea that I am losing my labor force," he explains. "Any investment has to make life easier for me and my family. And then I ask 'will it make me money.'"

In Part 2 in the next issue, we'll look at more risk-reducing strategies for new ventures.

Molly Ames is an Extension Resource Educator for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County, and Co-Director of New Strategies: Enhancing Profitability on North Country Farms, a project of New York Farm Viability Institute.

MARKETING

Grow Your Farm Business With Agritourism

When visitors flock to your farm, sales can grow and marketing risks shrink.

By Monika Roth

Editor's note: This article is part of a series focusing on risk management funded by the New York Crop Insurance Education Program under the Risk Management Agency (USDA) and the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets.

Agritourism is a direct marketing technique that offers additional income opportunities beyond farm products. In fact, your farm becomes the 'product' that you sell to customers – or at least you use the farm experience to bring in customers and increase sales.

The variety of attractions you can use to draw in, entertain and educate visitors is limited only by your imagination and creativity. They range from simple pick-your-own activities to full-fledged harvest festivals. (See sidebar, "Agritourism Ideas.")

These activities can help you reduce marketing and financial risks by increasing your customer base and income. But they are not without risks themselves. You need to carefully assess these risks and the potential benefits before you jump in.

WHAT MAKES YOU SPECIAL?

Start by evaluating your farm's assets. Do you have anything unique that provides customers with a reason to visit? A historic barn? A herd of Scottish Highland cattle? An organic dairy? An orchard or other crops that could be turned into a pick-your-own (PYO) enterprise?

Are there other ways you might modify your existing enterprises or facilities to make them interesting to visitors? Could you turn your barn into an agricultural history museum? Spruce up the farmstead and offer educational tours? Make cheese from your dairy's milk? Offer hayrides through the orchard?

List all the opportunities, and then assess each one. A key consideration is how much you are willing to invest in developing an agritourism activity. Weigh the potential costs and returns, and consider starting with those that present the least financial risk. A business plan is a good tool to help you to analyze the market and project returns.

Also consider how well your personal preferences and skills match the enterprise. Is this something you will enjoy doing? How will you feel about having visitors at your farm? Will it fit in with your family's routine? If having visitors around all the time is an issue, consider limiting yourself to weekend and/or seasonal agritourism activities.

Time is another major factor to consider. When assessing the opportunities, evaluate how much time each will take, and whether this fits with the existing demands of the farm. Who has the time to develop and implement the project? Identify a point person in your family who will follow through. It takes time to develop an agritourism enterprise, promote it and operate it. If you spend all your time dealing with visitors, who will actually do the farming?

In addition to time, you need to be seriously committed to developing the agritourism activity. Lack of commitment is a common reason for failure. Being committed means being fully invested in making your project succeed and that involves hard work. It may take several years to build your customer base and allow enough time for word-of-mouth advertising to spread. You need to be in it for the long haul.

Activities for children can make your farm a fun-filled destination and increase sales.

MANAGING LIABILITY

Once you narrow down your list of opportunities, consider the liability risk associated with each one. Generate a list of the ways visitors to your farm could injure themselves or be injured. Then identify ways to mitigate the potential for injury. How much will it cost to fix hazards that you've just lived with in the past?

Discuss liability risks with your insurance agent or attorney and decide what level of exposure you are willing to tolerate. Shop around for insurance and get quotes from several sources. It is not uncommon to find widely divergent views of risk and amount of protection required.

Most farmers already carry insurance to cover general liability, personal injury and property damage. Make sure it is adequate to cover any additional activities you offer. Product liability coverage is needed if you are involved in sales and professional liability coverage may be needed if you are providing a service.

Insurance does not exempt you from a thorough safety assessment of your farm and the activities you offer. Minimize risk at every step. Simple tactics like fencing off areas where you do not want visitors to go, putting railings on wagons, carrying bottled water only, offering hand-washing stations, and similar precautions can minimize risk.

SELL YOURSELF

Careful planning is only one step in developing successful agritourism enterprises. Another is to bring on the visitors. Growing an agritourism enterprise may involve a higher level of promotion than other direct marketing strategies, but marketing expenses won't necessarily cost much more.

A good starting place is to develop an appealing rack card or brochure. Visitor centers, hotels, restaurants, and other tourism destinations all have racks for visitors with information about things to do when visiting an area.

Be sure to connect with local or regional tourism agencies. Most publish an annual visitors guide and have websites listing attractions in the area. Often, listings are free.

Visitors bureau staff also look for stories to feed travel writers, and they host programs for tour operators to familiarize them with local attractions. By working with visitors bureaus, your unique agritourism enterprise could become the feature of these stories or tours. You should also consider developing your own website and making sure that visitors bureau sites link to it. Increasingly, visitors plan their trips through Internet research.

Being on a high-traffic road is less important with agritourism enterprises than it is with other direct-marketing efforts. People will go out of their way to find unique attractions. Your location may not be a good one for selling sweet corn from a roadside stand. But with an agritourism enterprise bringing customers to the farm, such enterprises might work.

Location is still important, though. Most visitors to agritourism farms come from within one or two hours' drive. You should be within that range of major population centers, and that's where you should focus your advertising efforts.

Be sure you have good signage and directions to help visitors find their way. It's not a good sign if the first thing visitors tell you is they had a hard time finding your farm.

To keep visitors coming back – and spreading the word about how much fun your farm is – it's imperative that they have a great time at your farm. Make sure you take good care of them, focusing on how they are greeted and treated. (Think about what's important to you when you get out of the car after a two-hour drive.) Even the most modest enterprise can be turned into a memorable experience if visitors are treated well.

Visitors want to learn about life on the farm – the animals and crops – relax in a country setting, and take part in something out of their normal realm of experience. Your activities should be focused on families and creating memories that last a lifetime. That will keep them coming back for generations.

Monika Roth is an Agriculture Development and Marketing Specialist with Cornell Cooperative Extension's South Central NY Agriculture Program based in Tompkins County.

Seasonal attractions like these humorous pumpkin people add a festive feel to agritourism operations.

Agritourism Ideas

Here's a list of agritourism ideas to get your creative juices flowing. Some of the best agritourism destinations combine several ideas at once, for example a fall harvest festival that offers haunted house, wagon tours, a corn maze, U-pick pumpkins and sales of other farm-raised or -made products.

Agritourism basics:
- Farm market
- Pick-your-own (PYO)
- Farm animals
- Displays
- Shopping
- Food to eat

Agri-entertainment:
- Harvest festivals - apple, pumpkin, strawberry, etc.
- Contests - pie baking/eating, pumpkin hurling, etc.
- Petting zoos, goat walks, pony rides
- Corn Maze, straw bale maze
- Hayrides, sleigh rides
- Spook barns, haunted hayrides
- Pumpkins carving, etc.
- Themed displays
- Storytelling
- Music, art, crafts festivals

Agri-education:
- Farm tours
- School, church, seniors groups
- How-to classes: cooking, food preservation, gardening, animal care, etc.
- Demos: sheep shearing, cheesemaking, etc.
- Rural crafts exhibits and demos
- Farm history/heritage

Nature tourism/active recreation:
- Nature hikes, forest walks, native plant walks
- Bird watching
- Mountain biking
- Horseback riding
- Fee hunting/fishing
- Trap and skeet, target shooting
- Archery
- Cross country skiing
- Orienteering
- Rock climbing

More … :
- Tasting/eating opportunities
- Farm gift shops - country crafts
- Farm lodging - B&B's, camping, cabin rental, etc.
- Hosting bus tours
- Family reunions, picnics, weddings, receptions
- Balloon rides

Resource Spotlight

Getting Started In Agritourism

Both these publications feature worksheets for developing agritourism business plans:

Agritourism and Nature Tourism in California – A comprehensive, 339-page manual from the UC-Davis Small Farm Center. $25. Ordering information: *www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/Docs/agritourhandbook.html*

Agri-Tourism – An online publication from Virginia Cooperative Extension: *www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/agritour/310-003/310-003.html*

COMMUNITY/WORLD

A Vermont Agritourism Sampler

Farm-based recreation/education ventures are on the rise, as public interest in local sustainable agriculture grows.

By Martha Herbert Izzi

Eight year old Alex has just bounded in from the barn where she's been helping with milking chores. Not unusual for a farm girl on a working 120-cow dairy. But Alex is a guest, thanks to her uncle who annually brings members of his family and friends from Florida and New York to Liberty Hill Farm in Rochester, Vermont, to experience what Beth Kennett says is "our farm, our family, our community."

Eight year old Alex reading 'The Midnight Farm' by Vermont writer Susan Jeffers

Photo by Ted Izzi

ENJOY A "FARM STAY"

Indeed, for twenty three years the Kennetts have welcomed over twenty thousand guests into their pristine, seven bedroom, 1870s farmhouse. Their visitors come for the opportunity to renew connections. It might be an extended family reunion, to maybe a simple gathering-in of the urban nuclear family whose frantic schedule precludes much family time together.

Without cell phones or televisions, there is a lot of family time at Liberty Hill. Moreover it is place to renew connections with the land, the animals, and food sources, which for most children begin and end at the supermarket.

The Kennetts began taking in guests during the economic downturn in the early 1980s to supplement their dwindling income from the dairy. "No farmer can exist on commodity prices," Beth says, but over time her mission has been to "educate" guests by providing an "authentic, working farm" experience.

EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Beyond the bed and breakfast and fun trips to the barn, or swimming in the river, guests are living and learning about environmental stewardship, soil and nutrient management and, says Beth, "We are showing people what that means to their lives and to the eco-system."

With food issues front and center in the media, at the farmer's markets, in films, on television and on the speaker circuit, more and more people are coming to the farm. To many farms. They ask questions, they see and even help with the workload, and slowly old stereotypes are replaced with a new awareness and appreciation of the connection between farm and table, health and environment.

How much of a role agritourism has played in the dramatic rise in interest and profitability of fresh, organic, locally grown food is unclear. Hard numbers are difficult to come by. According to Beth, who is chair of the Vermont Farms Association, it has been a huge contributor.

This year the New England Agricultural Statistics Service will produce the first survey of Vermont agritourism in seven years, and will document its economic impact. In 2000, it was estimated that thirty-one percent of all farms in Vermont received income from agritourism, amounting to $10.5 million. The Boston Globe reported that the figure rose to $19.5 million by 2002, an increase of 86%.

Liberty Hill Farm showing the newest barn, called Bovinity, at left, built by friends and neighbors of the Kennetts.

Photo by Ted Izzi

David Kennett, working with the herd inside Bovinity

Photo by Ted Izzi

SLEIGH RIDES AND SPINNING

"Farm Stay" businesses like the Kennett's make up only a very small part of Vermont agritourism enterprises. Only fifteen of the seventy-five member farms in the Vermont Farms Association providing lodging. The majority offer an array of other attractions and activities to satisfy diverse interests and ages.

For example, the Adams Farm in Wilmington draws over 45,000 visitors annually with outdoor livestock and agricultural demonstrations, sheep herding, working with llamas, yarn spinning, tractor and sleigh rides. The farm features a petting zoo, a large gift shop of Vermont products, even a Barn Theater showing a variety of historical, cultural and agricultural Vermont films.

Cheese-making classes and demonstrations are also a major draw for agritourists statewide, so Jill Adams and her husband are in the process of building a cheese parlor to meet the growing demand for specialized cheeses.

Ready, set, go. A full contingent setting off for a long sleigh ride at Adams Farm.

Photo by Ted Izzi

Jill Adams owner of Adams Farm behind the fudge counter at the store

Photo by Ted Izzi

CONFERENCE CATERING AND RETAIL FARM STORE

In the northern part of the state, the Clarks of Applecheek Farm in Hyde Park have built a large conference and meeting center on their dairy and poultry farm. The kitchen serves a varied menu of organic products, catered by son Jason Clark, a culinary school graduate.

As the interest in fresh, locally grown food continues its unparalleled growth, Jason's business has grown dramatically over the last five years. And the farm store operated by his brother and parents cannot meet the demand for raw milk, organic turkeys, even emus. Judy Clark was stunned last year when she realized that "so many people were willing to pay $7/pound for organic turkeys!"

Both Adams Farm and Applecheek draw winter visitors with sleigh rides which, in turn, bring more business for the other products and activities on the farm. But this winter started off warm and snowless, and they felt the ripple effect from the lack of skiers.

THE VERMONT FARMS ASSOCIATION

As farmers have become aware of the growing interest in organic food and food systems, many are seeing a new role for themselves as hosts and educators with an eye to the bottom line. According to Diane Konrady, Agritourism Coordinator for Vermont Farms Association, forty farmers have approached her with questions on membership requirements in the past two months.

Members of the Association must be working farms first and agritourism destinations second. "Those farms who offer things to do and something to take home are the most profitable, whether it be smoked cheese, quilts or maple syrup," Beth Kennett says.

And they must meet the standards of safety and cleanliness as well as authenticity. As members they have the benefit of sharing information and learning how to provide the best and most profitable experiences.

KEEPING IT REAL

She admits that some farmers have accused her of promoting entertainment, or 'agritainment' as it is known in some parts of the country. She says that it is easier in Vermont to meet the constant challenge of balancing authenticity with entertainment because most farms are small and don't promote the "theme park" experience.

Beth tells the story of a Georgia farm where thousands of kids were due the next day for a farm visit and expected to find pumpkins. The farmer couldn't meet the need for thousands of pumpkins, so he purchased them from a commercial grower and in the middle of the night strategically placed them in the gardens, and thus fulfilled the hopes and dreams of the school children.

With an infectious laugh, Beth says, "we don't do plastic pumpkins in Vermont."

To learn more about Vermont Agritourism go to *www.vtfarms.org* or call 1-866-348-FARM. Ask for the brochure listing all of the farm members, Vermont Farms: Working Farms Open to the Public.

Martha Herbert Izzi writes and raises Tunis sheep and Alpine goats at Bel Lana Farm in Shrewsbury, Vermont. She can be reached at mhizzi@aol.com.

> "I've got to forget everything my father ever taught me about farming and remember everything my grandfather ever said"
> -- Sumner Watson

Need Info?

Visit the Cornell Small Farms Program online at www.smallfarms.cornell.edu.

MARKETING

High Touch High Tech

Having a presence on the Internet is getting to be an ever more important tool for building relationships with customers. Here are some options for creating a web site for your farm.

By Mary Peabody

Small-scale farmers have learned that a high-touch approach is key to building customer loyalty. Little touches like remembering a customer's name, saving the last 2 perfect tomatoes for a regular customer that can't get to the market until late, and taking the time to offer preparation tips are all ways that farmers have learned to be high-touch marketers.

But we live in a world where technology is advancing at lightening speed. More and more of our customers are getting information digitally through pod casts, blogs, electronic newsletters and streaming audio and video. It's only a matter of time before your most loyal customers start expecting a cooking tip at 7pm on a Sunday evening or want to know what you'll be selling at Wednesday's market at 6am on Tuesday. They will want to know what sustainable production means and they'll want to be able to share pictures of your farm with family and friends over Thanksgiving weekend. In other words your customers are going to expect you to be increasingly high-tech.

If you operate a small business you already know that it is never good enough to be satisfied with what worked last year. Ongoing success requires constant attention to changing trends and being willing to meet the expectations of your customer. So how can a small-scale farmer compete in this increasingly high-tech world? And how do you find time to keep up with all these trends when you're already plenty busy raising great food and fiber?

The good news is that as all of this technology gets more mainstream, it also gets easier to use and less expensive to buy. Most moderately priced computers today come with all the bells and whistles you need to do a lot of the basics. Most of the time all you have to do is plug in a new piece of software or hardware and your computer will begin prompting you what to do next and usually in language that the average user can follow. OK, but that still takes time and a fair degree of confidence. What if you just don't have the time or interest?

Another strategy is to find a tech-savvy individual who is willing to exchange goods for services. In this way you can focus your time and energy on what you do best and still have a presence on the information highway. It is possible that you already have a customer that would be willing and able to help you out. If you are experienced with having apprentices on your farm then you might well be able to find an apprentice that is willing to exchange what they know about technology for what you know about production.

You might also want to consider taking a class or a workshop. The advantage of this option is that you can work on your materials in a group setting with a knowledgeable instructor at hand if you get stuck and a roomful of others that are struggling right along with you. The biggest payoff is that when the class is over your materials are done and ready to go.

Still another strategy is to hire someone to do what needs to be done. If you know what you want and just need someone to make it happen then you might be able to get by with a student from a nearby college or tech school. If you're not sure what you need then you might be better off hiring a consultant that can help with the planning as well as the actual building or upgrading of the site.

A last thought is to find a group of farmers that are interested in pooling their resources and hiring someone to work with the group as a whole. This can be hybrid option where individuals in the group can take on particular tasks that they can handle and hire the rest of the work out. For example, there may be someone in your group who is skilled at taking at digital photos. They might be willing to take photos of all the farms in your group in exchange for someone else writing some copy that might include brief stories about the participating farms, newsletter articles, and recipes. Someone else might be willing to record some stories or cooking tips. Then if you have an individual that can combine all those pieces you have the makings of a really dynamic site that will keep customers coming back to your site.

However you get the job done be aware that future success is likely going to require a mixture of high-tech and high-touch strategies.

Mary Peabody is Community Resources & Economic Development Specialist with University of Vermont Extension and Director of the Vermont Women's Agricultural Network. She can be reached at 802-223-2389 x13 or Mary.Peabody@uvm.edu.

Readers Write

Hi Joanna,

My partner Dani Baker and I went through the Building Your Small Farm Dream classes last fall in Jefferson County, NY. I want to tell you what a powerful impact they have had on us and our path toward our Small Farm Dream. We have been greatly enlightened and encouraged by the classes and the people we have met in and out of Cooperative Extension as a result.

Dani works full time plus for the state and I have a full time business off the farm. When we started the class we thought that maybe we would plant a few coldhardy grapes. Since taking the class (and still doing our full time gigs) we have done the following on our farm: made maple syrup for the first time (11 1/2 gallons) and sold it, planted 140 christmas trees, had our first honey harvest from our bees and sold the honey, planted, grew, and sold 3500 square feet of vegatables, planted 36 cold hardy grapevines of 11 varieties, opened and operated our road side produce stand, planted rasberries, rhubard, asparagus, cherries, and apricots for future years' harvest, and picked and sold pears and apples from trees already on our property.

Oh, and we also got certified organic on August 1st. We also purchased supplies to start some Shiitake mushroom logs, but amazingly we have not yet found the time to get those started! We also made piles of compost and prepared a new field for expansion in 2007. Our contact with Cornell Cooperative Extension has led us to attend numerous training sessions on production and marketing for most of the crops listed above and many others as well.

We are now furiously reading seed catalogs, reviewing our records from last year, and planning our 2007 growing season with great excitement and anticipation. We intend to quadruple our acreage of vegetables, from 1/12 acre to 1/3 acres. On the perennial side we expect to plant another 200 christmas trees and about 100 grapevines. If the weather permits, we hope to have a larger maple sugar operation this season. A drip irrigation system and a post-harvest crop processing system are two of our primary projects to increase our production efficiency this year. We have many other plans, but I hope you get the idea.

My point in telling all this is to give you a first hand view of the impact this program can have on someone with agricultural leanings. Dani and I are 100% sold on the value of this class, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and all of the networking and educational opportunies that can result from it… And I want you folks to realize how meaningful the work you do is to us. Keep up the good work, and let me know how we can help.

David Belding
Cross Island Farms
Clayton NY
www.crossislandfarms.com

Dear Anu,

…I found you folks by researching the 'net' and discovering a marvelous magazine: *Small Farm Quarterly*. There I was able to read an article which provided you as a contact for any questions regarding small farming. … I know that if I stand a chance of succeeding in farming I will need as much guidance as I can get. Everything I read about concerning agriculture in the North East has a connection to Cornell and its extension programs. An online program sounds like a great idea because geographically many future farmers have a disadvantage reaching out and connecting to the farming community…

The reality is that you folks have a great source of motivation and inspiration in your articles. As someone that is taking the first steps towards changing my life for the better (hopefully!)...the information I have gathered so far is priceless. Oh, by the way...I have only had the time to read only two of your issues!

If you know of any farmers who need a helping hand on the farm please let me know. I look forward to starting my first step into the world of farming with such an institution as Cornell. So don't keep me waiting.

George Laboy
For now....A City mouse
New York City

Editor's note: The following correspondence has been edited to protect the privacy of the person requesting assistance.

Dear Mr. Henning,

My family and I live outside of State College, PA, on 11 acres, most of it pastureland. The man who sold us the land gave us a copy of "Farmer's Friend", and told us to the read the article "Would you like to farm?" With our land, we had seriously considered it, but we know absolutely nothing about farming.

I'm wondering if you think it's possible that we could actually do some farming on our land. We have four children that are hard workers (we all are hard workers), but I just wonder with no knowledge or experience, do you think it's possible?

Please be honest with me. We had thought about dairy farming and raising crops (mostly for our own family consumption). If you think we're out of our minds, please tell me, and we'll just keep mowing the 11 acres.

Thanks, in advance, for your help.

L K
State College, PA

Bill Henning's reply
You are not out of your mind. 11 acres is a limited amount of land but you'd be surprised what can be done on 11 well-managed acres. You probably will not make a living but you should definitely lower your cost of living. I'm assuming all 11 acres are open and tillable &/or pasture. Suggestions:

TAKE ONE STEP AT A TIME

Step 1) Plant a big garden, then move to more or less as you like. Consider selling produce. Can, dry, freeze or whatever to preserve your own food. Spend the bare minimum at the super market. We have families that support a modest living off 5 acres of produce and direct marketing. Look into 'high tunnel' production to extend your growing season. Some good books: *Growing Produce Family Style* by Raymond J. Yoder; *High Tunnel Production Manual* from Penn State; Penn State has a lot of information on high tunnels.

Step 2) Plant a small orchard. Eat fresh in season and/or make jellies and jams. Good book: *Back Yard Fruit Production* by David R. Schlabach.

Step 3) Pastured poultry - 25 broilers & 25 layers for starters. Poultry can improve sheep & cow pasture. You'll never eat better chicken or eggs. Give some eggs away – they'll sell themselves. Good Books: Joel Saltin's *Pastured Poultry Profits; Chicken Tractor* by Andy Lee.

Step 4) Raise 8-10 Katahdin sheep (low maintenance hair breed) on 3 to 5 acres. Use management intensive grazing. There's no money in wool unless you are really creative with fine wool. Consider this only if you like lamb or have markets. Grass finished lamb tastes much better than grain finished lamb. Buy all your winter feed. Good books: *Story's Guide to Raising Sheep*; Penn State and the USDA has information on grazing.

Step 5) Place 6 feeder pigs on 1 acre of legume pasture. You can raise pork to sell in addition to what the family will need. Keeping a few sows to breed is another alternative. Good resources: *Story's Guide to Raising Pigs; Dirt Hog* by Kelly Klober; www.Port-A-Hut.com - adjust recommendations to your area; Iowa State University web site.

Step 6) A family cow bred to a beef bull will give you a year's supply of beef plus milk, cream, butter, and cheese. Have the cow bred artificially or take it to a bull. The butter and cheese you can make yourself. Buy your winter forage and the grain you'll need. You might not need any grain. Jerseys can make great family cows and when they're bred to an Angus bull – the beef produced is terrific. There will be plenty of milk for your family and the calf. Share the pasture with the sheep. Good books: *The Family Cow* by Dirk Van Loon; Joel Salatin's *Salad Bar Beef.*

I didn't even mention goats or honey bees.

I could go on and on. If you do this, it won't be easy. Your family will be healthier, happier, learn a work ethic, learn self-reliance and responsibility. You have probably developed those traits already but they will be even better. Best of all: you can give your children a fun filled, exciting adventure into what REALLY makes life tick. This wondrous journey will turn into memories that will travel with them throughout their days. Wouldn't it be great if your grandchildren passed the same experiences onto their grandchildren? That's called the power of compound influence.

Other sources of information: Cornell Small Farms Website www.smallfarms.cornell.edu; Penn State Cooperative Extension; Acres Magazine 800.355.5313; Rodale Institute, Kutztown, PA; *Family Friendly Farming* by Joel Salatin; *Living on an Acre* by Christine Woodside.

DO IT!! YOU'LL BE BUSY

Bill

COWS & CROPS

Forage Focus Cuts Feed-Cost Risks

Baleage system speeds harvest, makes the most of limited labor, and helps this dairy couple earn $3,000 more per month

By Joan Sinclair Petzen

Editor's note: This article is part of a series focusing on risk management funded by the New York Crop Insurance Education Program under the Risk Management Agency (USDA) and the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets.

CATTARAUGUS, N.Y. – Tom and Robin Degenfelder run their Pine Villa Dairy in western New York with clearly defined goals. They want to stay small but profitable, enjoy farming, quickly work their way out of debt, retire by age 55, and provide their children with the opportunity to farm, if they choose to.

To achieve those goals, they know it is critical to keep costs in line. So they focus on producing high-quality forage, since feed is their single largest cost. With their limited labor force, they've found that early, aggressive harvesting and a baleage system help them make lots of top-notch forage in a hurry, and provide their 110-cow herd with what they need to produce top-notch milk.

The Degenfelders started farming with rented ground and equipment in 1996, and moved their herd to their present farm in June 2000. Despite tower silos on the new farm, they settled on a baleage system using an in-line wrapper for storage and a vertical mixer wagon for feeding. In 2003, they added a managed grazing system to further decrease feed costs. And to focus even more on forages, in 2004 they started hiring out their corn silage harvest, and now also employ a custom operator to plant and spray their corn acres.

Focusing on forages has increased the Tom and Robin Degenfelder's net income about $39,000 a year. That's enough to make anyone smile

Photo by Lisa Kempisty

MAXIMIZE COMPONENTS, NOT POUNDS

The Degenfelders designed their feeding strategy to maximize component yields, rather than pounds of milk. That's because they are paid for their milk based on components. So for the milking herd, the couple's goal is to maximize forage intake, which requires forages with low neutral detergent fiber (NDF) content. They also feed high-quality forage to their heifers, so they require no grain from 8 months of age until freshening at 22 months.

If you visit the Degenfelders during the last two weeks in May, you just might get invited to leave unless you're willing to help cut, haul, or wrap forage. That's where Tom and Robin are focusing all their energy because they know making top-quality forage will determine their profitability this year, as well as their long-term success.

They cut their hay fields on a strict 30-day schedule, which in many years allows them to harvest four or even five cuttings, when two cuttings is more common in their area.

From a forage quality perspective, Tom has a motto: "Don't wrap crap." If you don't want to feed it to your cows, then you shouldn't try to feed it to your heifers, either. The couple use questionable forage for bedding, not feed.

To reduce the risk of crop failures, the Degenfelders match their crops to their soil types. They concentrate their corn production on their better soils (Chenango Channery and Mardin Channery silt loams) and hay on the less productive soils (Rhinebeck, Niagara, and Volusia Channery silt loams).

Tom has switched what he looks for in corn varieties to support their high-forage feeding goals. He used to choose varieties based on standability, days to maturity, and seed cost. Now, he favors varieties with high whole-plant digestibility and low fiber, and is willing to pay a little more for these traits.

The Degenfelders harvest grass on a strict 30-day schedule, often taking four or give cuttings in a year.

Photo by Desiree Ottley

A THREE-PART FORAGE STRATEGY:

Rely on grass baleage. Tom admits that dry hay is the best feed for cows. But it needs to dry for three or four days before baling. By making baleage, he cuts weather risks because he can cut the grass in the afternoon and have the bales wrapped before the end of the next day. Unlike silos or bunkers where continuous harvest is preferable, he can take advantage of two days of good weather to harvest 20 to 30 acres of grass per day.

Compared to dry hay, there's less leaf loss with baleage. NDF values for their grasses averaged 49 percent for the 2005 and 2006 harvest seasons. Protein levels for the Degenfelders' grass baleage run 18 to 21 percent.

Tom doesn't try to grow alfalfa because his low-pH soils aren't prime alfalfa ground. Grass is much more suited to his soils and has far fewer pest problems than alfalfa, he says. Feeding grass-legume forage mixes also causes more metabolic problems with dry stock, he's found.

While alfalfa tends to quickly die out on the Degenfelders' soils, their grass stands get stronger and healthier every year. Tom expects they'll last 10 to 15 years without replanting.

Manage fertility based on weather. Weather dictates fertilizer decisions at Pine Villa. In wetter years when grasses yield heavily, the Degenfelders use less fertilizer and the protein in the grasses is a little lower. In dry years, when the crop tends to be short, they apply a little extra fertilizer after each cutting to stimulate growth.

The Degenfelders' baleage system using an in-line wrapper helps them to put ip forage quickly with limited labor

Photo by Desiree Ottley

They usually apply 100 to 150 pounds of urea per acre (46 to 69 pounds of N/A) after first, second and third cuttings. Before first cutting, they usually apply less – 50 pounds of urea per acre – so that the grass doesn't get too rank before they can harvest it, which can be a big problem during wet springs.

Harvest aggressively. Aggressive cutting practices not only ensure high quality forage, but also reduce weed infestations by never letting them go to seed. First cutting begins around May 10 or so, and is usually harvested almost entirely as baleage. Later in the season when harvest windows are wider, the Degenfelders will make more dry hay.

The Degenfelders stagger harvest depending on the location of the field (fields at higher elevation tending to mature more slowly) and the grass species. The couple grows several dual-purpose grasses that they harvest for either dry hay or baleage, including orchardgrass, reed canarygrass, fescue and timothy – all planted on fields that tend to dry out faster. On fields that tend to dry out more slowly, they grow perennial ryegrass and harvest it only for baleage because it dries more slowly.

When fields are ready to harvest and the weather is right, they strive to mow 20 to 30 acres each afternoon. Early the next morning they rake two or three rows into one. Then they begin baling in late morning or early afternoon, depending upon moisture content and weather conditions. They wrap bales as soon as possible – always the same day they're baled – to stop respiration and capture the maximum nutrients. If they're short on time, they can even finish bale wrapping after evening chores.

The key to making quality baleage, says Tom, is to make a tight bale. He uses a fixed-chamber baler and drives slowly – around 3 to 5 miles per hour – depending on the density of the windrow. Baling may take a little longer. But he has fewer (though heavier) bales to transport and wrap, and the bale is wound tight enough to maintain quality.

BIG SAVINGS AND MORE INCOME

When Tom and Robin got serious about maximizing high-quality forage intake, milk production increased by 4 to 5 pounds per cow per day. Butterfat went up from 3.85 to 4.1 percent, and protein increased from 3.05 to 3.25 percent.

The ratio of forage to grain in the ration increased from 58:42 to 62:38. At the same time, they were able to stop feeding Rumensin, save 225 pounds of grain each day, and quit feeding two bags of energy booster each week.

These changes resulted in savings of $1,265 per month. The higher milk production and components increased the Degenfelders' milk check by $2,000 per month. That combined savings and increased income adds up to an increase in net income of $3,265 per month, or more than $39,000 each year for the 110-cow herd.

Managing change and measuring the results helps the Degenfelders achieve their goals. Their high forage feeding program makes them less reliant on expensive purchased grains, reducing their financial risks. Being on a sound financial footing makes it much easier for them to weather the ups and downs in milk prices. What on the surface appears to be just plain good management is, in reality, a solid risk management plan for the Degenfelders.

Joan Sinclair Petzen is an Extension Issue Leader at Cornell Cooperative Extension, Allegany/Cattaraugus Counties.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A Model for Sustainable Farming

By Bill Henning

A model for sustainable farms provides an example we can study and discuss. Without a model, sustainability is an abstract concept with as many interpretations as there are people considering it. Sustainability means simply, "The ability to meet our needs today without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs."

THE MODEL

We need only look back about 50 years and apply some modern technology to build a model for a sustainable farm. The typical dairy farm in the 1950s and early 1960s gives us a starting point. Such a farm usually had:

A) About 30 cows.
B) 12,000 to 14,000 pounds herd average
C) Less grain fed than today
D) Most, if not all, homegrown forage and grain
E) Pastures
F) Lower protein intake than today
G) Less use of commercial fertilizers
H) Lower crop yields
I) Homegrown straw
J) Very little use of continuous confinement
K) Manure piled or spread daily
L) Often more than one enterprise

IMPACTS OF ADOPTING THIS MODEL

A) Twenty 30-cow farms replacing a 600-cow farm would have a greater geographical dispersion, thus diluting any potential negative environmental and social impacts. Those twenty farms would also provide places where twenty families could live, work, and eat meals - together.

B) 12,000 to 14,000 pound herd averages would be the norm. Many would argue a farm must first be profitable, in terms of dollars, to be sustainable, and that a 12,000-pound herd average cannot be profitable. But we have farms today with 12,000-pound averages that are able to make a reasonable return to labor and management and still make principal payments. These farms are already operating much closer to the model.

C) Typically, these cows would consume 10 pounds of grain or less per day. The cows would be less stressed, leading to improved health. Johne's is a prime example. This disease has probably been with us for centuries. It has only become of significant importance since we have pushed milk production needlessly high. If we remove the stress and implement certain cultural practices, Johne's ceases to be a concern. We also know that cows managed in terms of the model last easily twice as long, reducing a farm's need to grow replacements and/or offering other sources of income – heifers for sale.

D) All, or almost all, forages and concentrates would be raised on the farm. This would potentially reduce the number of cows that the farm would carry by today's standards. However, it does not necessarily reduce the number of cows per crop acre. This enhances nutrient management, reduces market risk, and conserves energy.

E) Managed grazing on these farms would reduce farm overhead, labor, and feed cost, while improving cow health. Cows harvest their own feed and spread their own manure. Grazing also reduces the need for mechanization while improving farm safety. Graziers report they find farming more enjoyable. The USDA indicates grazing to be the most important agricultural practice contributing to our nation's quality of water.

F) Moderate protein feeding reduces the level of soil nitrogen available for potential pollution.

G) Due to improved cultural practices the need for commercial fertilizers might completely disappear. Without the use of fertilizer salts soil pH level could be more easily maintained with reduced lime use.

H) Crop yields might well increase. The Rodale Institute in Kutztown, PA, routinely meets or exceeds the Burks County yield averages using regenerative methods and without any synthetic fertilizers. They consistently out-yield the county averages in years of stress.

I) Including cereal grains, for energy concentrate, in the cropping system would help diversify the crop rotation. This can contribute to improved pest management, increased soil organic matter, and enhanced nutrient management while making farms less dependent on potentially volatile market prices. The straw used for bedding also provides a carbon source for composting manure. The composted manure returns fertility to the soil in a slow release form that minimizes any potential nutrient runoff while increasing soil organic matter and soil life.

Sustainability: The ability to meet our needs today without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

J) Free stall barns, as we know them, would be abandoned for the sake of cow comfort. Loose housing on well managed, composting bedded packs offers cows the most optimal comfort outside of the pasture.

K) Composting bedded pack manure would replace liquid manure systems. Not only does composted manure improve nutrient management, it reduces the amount of material hauled to the field and the amount of bedding required for the cows. It does require labor and management but this can be seen as an investment. Using compost to eliminate the use of manure slurry enhances soil life, including worms (nature's plows), resulting in greater soil moisture and soil oxygen. This healthy soil is more resilient during radical environmental swings. It produces plants demonstrating stronger immune systems.

L) Dairy production would not be the farm's sole income. Diversification of enterprises, in a manner suitable to the situation, would provide an increment of risk management in terms of finances and environmental stability.

REBUTTAL IN ADVANCE OF CRITICISM

1) We can't feed all the people of the world using this kind of farming.
Rebuttal: If we applied as much effort working in concert with nature as we have spent trying to extort nature, it is most likely food production would be even greater than it is today and at lower cost – mostly in terms of energy.

2) We do not have enough land to farm to the model.
Rebuttal: We have vacant land right now. We are paving over our most fertile, best drained soils at a perilous rate for no better reason than greed. And, if the current farming practices are not sustainable, which is most likely, the criticism is moot.

3) If people were starving they wouldn't care about a few chemicals in their food.
Rebuttal: Generally speaking, Americans are not starving, just the opposite. On a worldwide basis thousands starve to death every day. To a great extent, this is the result of mankind's failure to address the most important issues in life. It is not the fault of food production. A growing body of evidence suggests that consuming foods that are more naturally produced makes humans healthier as a result.

4) The model will not provide as much milk as current production practices.
Rebuttal: Historically, the supply/demand equation for milk has been elastic. A small depression in supply can cause a significant jump in price. The law of supply and demand is capable of finding equilibrium. A sustaining society would accomplish this through more small farms rather than fewer bigger farms.

AND THERE'S MORE…

Sixty years of university studies throughout the United States all draw basically the same conclusion: Those communities that have a high proportion of middle class, self employed individuals experience less unemployment, less reliance on welfare, less violent crime, and greater community vitality than communities where most of the people are employed by someone or something else. Nothing encourages a high proportion of middle class, self employed people more in a rural community than a high proportion of small, independent, family operated farms. These farms offer perhaps the best possible environment in which both parents can nurture children. Given proper parenting, the model also provides a sustainable source of future farmers.

Bill Henning is a Small Farm Specialist with CCE's NWNY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team. Bill welcomes your comments in response to this article. You can email him at wrh6@cornell.edu.

MARKETING

Not Ready to Build Your Own Website?

See what the internet can do for you by listing your farm on an existing website

By Bernadette Logozar

There are so many ways to stay connected with your customers. Mary Peabody's article "High Touch, High Tech" discusses how small scale farmers can use the Internet as a way to keep a 'high touch' with your customers.

But what if you're not ready yet to head to the back office and build your own website? What if you don't have knowledge and skills to build your own, and you don't have the funds to pay someone to build it for you? Well don't despair. There are options available for you too!

There are a number of different websites where you can place your products for sale, advertise your farm or invite visitors to your farm without having to go through the process of building your own website right off the bat. These sites offer farmers, growers and crafters a great way to have a web presence and test out this market without going through the hassle and possibly the expense of creating and managing their own website. Furthermore, you will find out rather quickly whether the internet is a place you want to be.

In this article we are going to look at a few possibilities available on the web. Each of these can be a good option for farmers interested in having a web presence but not quite ready to build your own site. Even if you have your own site, there's no harm in being listed in several places on the internet.

REGIONAL AND STATEWIDE ONLINE FARM LISTINGS

One easy way to get your products or your farm listed on the Internet is to become a member of a regional or state promotional initiative such as Adirondack Harvest, Fingerlakes Culinary Bounty or Pride of New York. These may or may not require an initial membership fee in order to join. Each of these examples has a related logo and web presence.

For example when you join the Adirondack Harvest Initiative, your farm, what you have available, and where people can get those products will be listed on the Adirondack Harvest website. Look for initiatives in your area that not only highlight your region but also are in line with the business and management philosophy of your farm operation.

I would also encourage you to take part in the promotional and marketing initiatives available at the state level. Each of these programs has built credibility and logo recognition related to their initiatives. By being part of these ventures you are telling your customers that your farm business is in line with the sentiments of the larger program. Again these are low-cost, low-risk ways have a web presence and test that market without going through the expense of building your own website.

This type of website is called a gateway website because they act as a gateway to information about your products and your farm business, but they are not an online storefront to actually sell your product. Having your information out there is great, but it is up to you to keep your information updated and current. If you add some products or drop some, change phone numbers, or add another way customers can connect with you, then you need to ensure that your farm and product listings are updated on the web site. Doing this requires no special software or skills, just a password which is provided when you sign up to be listed.

To visit the sites mentioned here go to: *www.adirondackharvest.com*; *www.fingerlakesculinarybounty.org*; and *www.prideofny.com.*

STOREFRONT WEBSITES

There are also "storefront" websites through which farmers actually sell products, primarily non-perishable products. One is LocalHarvest, which features organic and sustainably grown products from across the US. LocalHarvest also serves as a public nationwide directory of small farms, farmers markets, and other local food sources. . This site is searchable by product, region, and type of farm or enterprise and also highlights the farmers markets across the country. Currently there are 354 New York farms listed on LocalHarvest.

The LocalHarvest site features an online store, and a place to list your farm and post your farm story. What is really great about this site is that new members are given homepage spot so regular visitors can easily see who has been added to the database. Creating a listing on LocalHarvest is free, but you need to fit the criteria that are clearly laid out on the membership screen. This is another great site for those who are considering getting into e-commerce but aren't ready to build their own website just yet. To check it out visit *www.localharvest.org.*

SUNY MORRISVILLE'S ONLINE FARMERS' MARKET

One opportunity is coming to farmers in New York courtesy of SUNY Morrisville, where

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New York State's Pride of NY Program offers online listings for farmers.

WWW.ADIRONDACKHARVEST.COM

Adirondack Harvest is an example of a regional organization which provides an internet presence for participating farms.

they are currently building an e-commerce storefront for ag producers. This project involves the Morrisville State College's Computing and Information Technologies Professor, Kim Mills, Agricultural Business Assistant Professor Sheila Marshman and 20 producers and processors to develop a model for farmer-to-customer selling via the Internet.

This online farmer's market has some very specific goals. These include increasing the profitability of each participating farm by at least 10% in the first year with a 4-year cumulative profit in excess of $4 million for more than 500 participating farmers from across New York State. The online farmers market will act as a virtual warehouse and online storefront for the farmers of New York. The database behind the website will keep track of sales, orders and inventory. Keeping farmers informed of the sales of their products and tracking their inventory listed with the database is also a huge part of this project.

"This project provides farmers with a low-cost, low-risk opportunity to see how their products might sell in an online market," says Mills. This is a golden opportunity for those folks who are contemplating getting into the e-commerce arena but aren't certain whether this is the place for them to be. The new website at *www.newyorkfarmmarket.com* is expected to go live by the end of the year.

If you are interested in being part of this project or would like more information about the Online Farmers Market Project contact Kim Mills at 315-684-6746 or email at *millsk@morrisville.edu.*

MARKETMAKER™

Another online direct marketing tool coming to New York state farmers is MarketMaker™, which was first developed by the University of Illinois Extension as a web-based network to connect farmers and processors with food retailers and consumers. Currently it is one of the most extensive collections of searchable food industry related data for the states of Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska. And it is now coming to Kentucky and New York.

The New York State effort is being coordinated by Cornell Cooperative Extension's New York City office. Staff there are compiling multiple databases of NYS farmers markets, state and federally inspected plants, and farmers; recruiting farmer listings; and developing an outreach program to teach food and farm entrepreneurs how to use the NY site once it is launched. All farmers and businesses listed in the MarketMaker™ database will be able to create, edit and update their own online profiles via secure password access.

To see what has been done in Illinois visit: *www.marketmaker.uiuc.edu*; Iowa *http://ia.marketmaker.uiuc.edu*; Nebraska *http://ne.marketmaker.uiuc.edu*. f you would like to be listed on the New York MarketMaker site contact John Ameroso at *jma20@cornell.edu*, John Nettleton at *jsn10@cornell.edu*, or Dr. Khin Mar Cho at *Khinmarcho@hotmail.com*.

I have highlighted four options here, there are more options out there. These are four ways that you can begin your foray into the world of e-commerce, before putting out the money needed to create your own website. Each of these examples have advantages and disadvantages, determining which ones work best for you is just like assessing any other promotional and marketing angle you integrate into your marketing plan. Only YOU can determine what would work best for your business. Hopefully this article gave you a starting place to begin this process.

Bernadette Logozar is Rural and Ag Economic Development Specialist with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Franklin County. If you have questions about e-commerce, building your own website or the resources contained in this article do not hesitate to contact Bernadette at 518-483-7403 or email her at bel7@cornell.edu.

Northeast Small Farm & Rural Living Expo Coming to New York in October!

The Northeast Small Farm and Rural Living Expo and Trade Show is coming back to the Hudson Valley on Saturday, Oct. 13th and Sunday, Oct 14th, from 9am to 4pm. Once again the Ulster County Fairgrounds will be host to the event. The Small Farm and Rural Living Expo, which rotates between New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, will attract thousands of people who are interested in learning more about farming and rural living.

As in years past, this 7th annual Expo will feature demonstrations, workshops and classes on commercial horticulture, natural resources, equine/livestock farming and various topics on rural living. There will also be children's educational activities, farm animals, farm equipment, and fun activities for the entire family.

The Expo planning committee is looking for vendors to exhibit at this year's Expo. Space is available for agricultural agencies, commodity and breed associations, building and fence companies, feed and animal care companies, rural living product suppliers, small farm equipment manufacturers, and other businesses interested in reaching people interest in farming and rural living.

For more information about booth sizes and fees, please contact Joe Walsh at (845) 292-6180, jjw11@cornell.edu or Larry Hulle at (845) 344-1234, lrh6@cornell.edu . Bookmark our website for updates on the Small Farm and Rural Living Expo at *www.smallfarmexpo.org.* The Cornell Small Farms Program is proud to co-sponsor this year's Expo.

NEW FARMERS

Big Bucks from Small Spaces

Half Pint Farm Models High-Value Possibilities

By Erica Frenay

Mara and Spencer Welton packed the room at this year's PASA conference with their provocatively titled talk, "We Made $50,000 on One Acre." When they spoke at the previous year's PASA conference, heading into their 4th farming season, they had shared their $50,000 goal with the crowd. The response was mostly pessimistic.

But in fact, Mara and Spencer beat their goal, with gross sales of $63,000 this year from their one-acre farm in Burlington, Vermont. Not bad for a couple of city kids who don't own any land and started with no capital. Their story is an inspiration for beginning farmers about the power of planning and dreaming.

Mara and Spencer grew up in inner-city Denver, and attended the University of Colorado at Boulder. Spencer got a degree in Classics, while Mara studied Anthropology. Their interest in an agricultural livelihood took root during a post-graduation stint in the Peace Corps, where they were stationed in the Solomon Islands. Mara taught small business management and Spencer taught agriculture.

Photo by Spencer Welton

Mara and Spencer Welton grossed $63,000 on one acre in their fourth farming season. Not bad for a couple of city kids who don't own any land and started with no capital.

Photo by Mara Welton

Photo by Phillip Sandoval

After the Peace Corps they moved to Pennsylvania, where Spencer got a Master's of Science in Sustainable Systems and some more agricultural experience managing an on-campus market garden. After graduating, he and Mara moved to Vermont to start Half Pint Farm on an acre of leased land in urban Burlington.

They leased the land from the non-profit Intervale Center, which manages 354 acres of farmland, nursery, trails, and wildlife corridors along the Winooski River within the Burlington city limits. The Center serves as a "farmer incubator" by providing land access and shared equipment. Eleven farms in addition to Half Pint lease land there too, ranging in size from 2 to 40 acres.

SPECIALIZED PRODUCTION

Early on the Weltons realized the need to specialize, to distinguish their farm from others. Now they are known by farmer's market customers as the 'baby vegetable' people. They are also known for their unusual colors and varieties, high quality, and gorgeous farmer's market display.

Though they were tempted to lease more land and expand into livestock enterprises, they decided it was more important to keep getting better at what they already do. They started focusing on fewer varieties in order to grow better produce, and set an annual goal to be better growers. Last season, they followed tips gleaned from organic gardening publications, and took the time to do the mulching, spot fertilization, and trellising that many gardeners do. Mara says, "In 2006, we farmed like gardeners. Everything was beautiful!"

The Weltons specialize in unusual colors and varities of vegetables, like these heirloom tomatoes and root crops.

Photos by Mara Welton

One-sixth of their total revenue came from microgreens, a multi-colored mix of about a dozen varieties of greens grown under shelter and harvested at the first true leaf stage. These retail for $24/lb and wholesale for $17/lb. The remainder of Half Pint's bestseller list for 2006 was filled out by tomatoes, potted plants, carrots, head lettuce, salad, squash blossoms, beans, potatoes, and radishes.

Which brings us to a personal rule to which Mara and Spencer adhere strictly: Don't be afraid to axe a crop if it's not earning enough money! They dropped winter squash, melons, most herbs, broccoli raab, peas, cabbage, most flowers, and okra for this reason.

SAVVY MARKETING

Three markets receive most of the fruits of Mara and Spencer's labor. They sell to high end chefs in Burlington, a weekly farmer's market, and a natural foods store. They have put a lot of effort into developing these markets. Spencer figures that they only spend about 20% of their time actually growing the crops; 80% of the time they're harvesting for market or actually selling their produce.

The Weltons have carefully cultivated their chef contacts, and continue nurturing these relationships every year. In the spring the farmers send out a letter with a list of produce they plan to grow, and ask the chefs if they have any requests. Twice a week Mara calls each chef to check in and get orders. Several times a season she and Spencer patronize the fancy restaurants where they sell their products. Mara says that although they end up spending a lot on dinner, they usually make it up in increased orders from the appreciative chef over the coming weeks.

The Weltons' personable natures are their own value-added. They will do absolutely anything for their customers. One elderly woman brought them Hungarian pepper seeds from his home country, and asked the farmers to plant them. They did, and then brought the fruits of those plants to market to sell. In doing so, they earned a customer for life.

Customers are drawn to Half-Pint Farm's gorgeous farmer's market displays.

Photo by Nancy Johnson

Photo by Mara Welton

CLEAR GOALS AND THOROUGH PLANNING

The Weltons are such fastidious planners that they could have had successful careers as accountants. Lucky for their customers, they decided to grow good food instead. They credit their goal-setting, tracking, and follow-through for their success.

Twice a year, they hold "Half Pint Farm Conferences," formal full-day events to which Mara and Spencer are the sole attendees. They draw up structured schedules and agendas and distribute reading packets to each other in advance. At their winter conference, they establish a financial goal for the season, which has grown substantially each year. Spencer then uses a cash flow sheet to enter income estimates for each week of the season, tweaking it until the numbers add up to their goal.

This goal literally drives the farmers' day-to-day activity throughout the growing season: they create field maps, seeding orders, a planting plan, and a marketing strategy that are all keyed into this magic number. From these, they derive precise seeding schedules and task sheets that divide up the week's chores, making each day less stressful because the Weltons know exactly what they need to accomplish. At the farmer's market each week, they know precisely how much they need to sell in order to reach their target, and they do a little celebration dance when they hit it. They are so organized, it's no wonder they've exceeded their financial goal every year so far.

Tomatoes and peppers thrive in an unheated plastic hoophouse.

Photo by Mara Welton

TIGHT RECORDKEEPING

To hear the Weltons describe their operation, it seems they have a spreadsheet for everything: weather, hours worked, cash flow, and crop yields, especially for those lucrative microgreens. They love to track everything, though they admit that it's a challenge to actually do all this paperwork under the duress of the growing season. To make it as easy as possible, most of the spreadsheets live in a field binder that is always nearby and is also used to track daily things of note.

All the planning in the world can't *protect* you from the vagaries of farming, but it can help *prepare* you for whatever disasters may strike. Like all farmers, Spencer and Mara have weathered a few disasters, including dysfunctional irrigation systems (during the hottest part of the season), and this spring, flooding that submerged their fields under 3 feet of water. "Having the field map totally figured out before we planted our first seeds was absolutely critical to our success this year," Mara said. "When the fields flooded, we could take our plan and modify it, rather than having to start from scratch."

CREATIVE FINANCING

The Weltons began their business with $0 of their own money and the goal of making enough farm profit to put a down payment on a house in Burlington. Five years later they've bought that house, with a down payment they earned by farming. How did they do it?

They got started by cashing one of those promotional checks that credit card companies periodically send out. This provided them with a $3,500 loan that was interest-free for the first year. This method of farm financing is not generally recommended–credit card debt can quickly swallow the unwary consumer–but the Weltons knew as long as they could pay it back within the year, they were in good shape. They did this easily and just kept on growing from there.

While Mara and Spencer's model wouldn't work for everyone, it's an inspiring example of how hard work and a whole lot of planning can be more important than having land or money to make a farm dream come true.

Erica Frenay serves as Coordinator of the Beginning Farmer Education Initiative with Cornell's Small Farms Program.

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Business Management

When Disaster Strikes

FSA Emergency Loan helps Lewis County family rebuild after "Mother of All Bad Hair Days" destroys dairy barn

By Michael Mannigan

Chances are you don't remember what were you doing on Friday February 17, 2006. For Dale and Judy Davis of Lowville, New York it was a day they will never forget. A wind storm roared into Lewis County, with reports of winds gusting in excess of 90 miles per hour. A local news website called it the "mother of all bad hair days".

The barn before it collapsed.

They were feeding hay to their 60 cow herd and listening to the howling wind. Suddenly they heard a loud CRACK! overhead. Dale screamed, "Get out!" They started to run out of the barn with Judy in the lead, when Dale tripped and fell. With a thunderous roar, the barn came crashing down. Judy feared the worst when she turned around and couldn't see her husband through the cloud of dust. Finally Dale emerged from the debris unhurt. He'd landed barely three feet ahead of where main beams crashed to the concrete barn floor.

On February 17,2006, Dale and Judy Davis's barn collapsed, killing more than half of their 60 cows and almost killing Dale.

Once they recovered from the initial shock, they realized all of the cattle on the east half of the barn were dead, while animals on the west half were either wounded or trapped. The Davises were so shaken, they didn't even want to go into their house. Once they cleared their heads, they went in and called Lewis County 911.

SURVEYING THE DAMAGE

A knot tightened in my stomach when I heard the news of the barn collapse. As the Davis' FSA Loan Officer, I had called to see how they were doing only two weeks earlier. Dale & Judy had moved to this farm in early 2004 and were making good progress increasing milk production. They were optimistic that 2006 promised some real progress for their operation. Little did they know that in a "New York minute" their livelihood would come crashing down.

On Tuesday February 21, I went out to survey the damage and speak with the Davises. As I pulled into the driveway, dead cows were being hoisted out of the twisted remains of the old tie-stall barn. Only a small section of the south end of the barn remained standing… the part that saved Dale from meeting the same fate as his cows. Dale and Judy were still noticeably frazzled from the whirlwind of stress and lack of sleep over the last four days.

Clean up began almost immediately, as did the "moutains of paperwork" to get help recovering from disaster.

The Davises related their accounts of the days' events and continued to echo how fortunate they were to have such a tremendous outpouring of community support. Dale commended the tireless efforts of the volunteer fire departments, town crews and neighbors. He said, "They just took over." Dale and Judy were able to save almost half of the dairy herd and move them to a barn two miles away. This temporary arrangement would give them time to contemplate their next steps.

BIG DECISIONS

The Davises faced some important decisions regarding their future. Should they rebuild? Should they liquidate the operation and get off-farm jobs? Should they look at another farm? Mike helped them weigh their options, but as he said, "I'm not the one that's going to be milking the cows."

After no small amount of soul searching, Dale and Judy decided to rebuild a modern freestall barn. Construction began on July 17.

After no small amount of soul searching, Dale and Judy decided to rebuild. Mike assured them that someday they would look back and see the barn collapse as a blessing in disguise. The opportunity to rebuild a modern, efficient dairy barn would reduce their milking time and improve cow comfort.

After what Judy described as "mountains of paperwork", the Davises were approved for an emergency loan to build a new barn. On Dale's 43rd birthday, July 17th, he got the best present he could hope for….crews from Bauer Masonry and Concrete, Inc. began excavation for the new freestall barn. A week later, concrete was poured. Despite Bauer's rapid pace, the next six weeks seemed an agonizingly long time for the Davis'.

A HAPPY ENDING

More than six months after that fateful day, the "cows came home" on September 1. Dale said the first couple of milkings were "a nightmare", but as the cows adjusted, things settled down into a regular routine.

"FSA has been good to us" Dale says. "They helped us from day one. They found a farm for us when we wanted to move from Jefferson to Lewis County. When the barn collapsed, Mike gave 110% to get us through the headaches & hassles of the government paperwork."

Dale's advice to other producers who suffer devastating losses: "Take your time and decide what YOU want to do. Take a good hard look at your situation. Then get in touch with everyone… suppliers, feed dealers, vets, contractors…Talk to FSA once you know what the game plan is. Make sure you cover all of your options."

The cows came home six months later on September 1, 2006

Judy says, "Some days I think we're nuts, but dairy farming beats working for someone else." When asked about dealing with FSA, she quipped "They were good except for the mountains of paperwork, but that's government."

In addition to FSA, Dale and Judy asked the following be recognized for their efforts during the recovery:
Bauer Concrete & Masonry, Inc.
Lowville Farmers' Co-op
Countryside Veterinary Clinic
Brown's Feed and their representative Bob Laisdell
Area volunteer fire departments
Everyone who helped, prayed and supported their recovery

Michael Mannigan is a Farm Loan Officer with USDA-FSA in Watertown, NY.
Author's note: "During the writing of this article, I asked the Davises to provide specific details about their harrowing ordeal. Even a year later, those haunting memories of cattle that were killed, and Dale's narrow escape brought the couple to tears—a true testament to the agony that accompanies such a tragic event. This is one example of the thousands of farm families Farm Service Agency has helped recover from natural disaster. This article is dedicated to the American Farmer and to those who support them."

Resource Spotlight

FSA Emergency Farm Loans

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides emergency loans to help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding, other natural disasters, or quarantine.

Emergency loan funds may be used to:
Restore or replace essential property;
Pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year;
Pay essential family living expenses;
Reorganize the farming operation; and
Refinance certain debts.

Eligibility: Emergency loans may be made to farmers and ranchers who:
Own or operate land located in a county declared by the President as a disaster area or designated by the Secretary of Agriculture as a disaster area or quarantine area (for physical losses only, the FSA Administrator may authorize emergency loan assistance);
Are established family farm operators and have sufficient farming or ranching experience;
Are citizens or permanent residents of the United States;
Have suffered at least a 30-percent loss in crop production or a physical loss to livestock, livestock products, real estate, or chattel property;
Have an acceptable credit history;
Are unable to receive credit from commercial sources;
Can provide collateral to secure the loan; and
Have repayment ability.

Producers can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production or physical losses, to a maximum amount of $500,000. Applications for emergency loans must be received within 8 months of the county's disaster or quarantine designation date.
Further information on the emergency loan program is available from your local USDA Service Center.

GRAZING

Graze or Die

Just ask any dairy grazier to find out why YOU might want to make the switch

By Karen Hoffman Sullivan

Over a year ago, a friend of mine who is interested in health and nutrition gave me an article entitled "Change or die". Originally published in the May 2005 issue of *Fast Company* magazine, it was authored by Alan Deutschman, who has since written a book with the same title. The article was focused on how difficult it is for people to change their behavior, especially in terms of diet and exercise. For many reasons, I saw a direct parallel to animal agriculture. Let me explain.

Grazing keeps this central NY dairy ALIVE
Photo by Karen Hoffman Sullivan

Research in health care has shown that when people are suffering from chronic and serious diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease, they are quite often told that they can improve their health or save their lives by changing their lifestyle choices. Eat better, exercise more, stop smoking or drinking alcohol – and the reasons given for making those changes are quite often presented based on the facts that doing those things can make a difference.

Yet most people do not change their lifestyle choices and behaviors when presented with the facts – facts are fairly uninspiring. Deutschman says that 90% of coronary-artery bypass patients do not change their lifestyle or behavior after surgery, *even though doing so would prevent them from dying.*

We only change our behavior when we are presented with the emotional reasons to change – live to see our grandchildren grow, be able to do things we really enjoy, like more "romantic interludes," or sports with less or no pain, or dancing at our daughter's wedding. It is the things that reach us at the emotional level that motivate us to change our lifestyle choices, not the facts.

Behavior change is extremely difficult, even for the best of us. We need emotional reasons to do so, yet we are constantly presented with the factual reasons instead.

So, how does this relate to animal agriculture? It's fairly easy when you look across the landscape and see how many farms have *died* over the last few decades because they were unwilling to change how they farmed.

Those of us in the roles of "agency advisors" to farmers have been guilty of presenting our clientele with "the facts" for far too long. When we talk to a dairy farmer about switching from confinement feeding year-round to grazing their cows for 6 months of the year, we tell them about how their feed costs will drop, cow health will improve, and equipment will require less maintenance and repair. We show them the results of studies – tables of economic data, charts of pasture protein levels compared to stored forage, and diagrams of grass growth rates – *but rarely do we talk about things that have emotional appeal.*

Sales people have always been quite good at making emotional appeals to both farm and non-farm consumers when they are trying to make a sale. That is why we buy new cars and trucks with all the safety options (for the kids), the big screen television (for the kids and to make your friends jealous), and the tractors with comfort cabs, GPS-computer units, and lots of horsepower (for the kids…no wait, to make your tractor-time more enjoyable, as well as to make friends and farming neighbors jealous). Regardless of who you are, or what you do for a living, the emotional sales pitch almost always works.

Is there any emotional appeal of grazing? Of course there is! However, as pointed out above, we agency staff do our best to present our "unbiased", and fairly unemotional, opinions. But it's the people who have been grazing on their farms who are the best advocates for grazing, because they experience the emotional benefits on a daily basis. They point out things like more time to spend with kids, and doing things with kids on the farm that are safer and more enjoyable, as well as the prospect that the kids may want to come back to the farm when they are older.

Quality time with a spouse is another emotionally appealing aspect of grazing, because you're not going to be stuck on a tractor from dawn till dusk during the spring and summer as much – the animals do much of the harvest. Being able to sleep at night because the bank and the feed company aren't watching you like a hawk to make sure you make your payments – you become a customer they can count on to be on time.

Grazing provides more money to take a family vacation, and the ability to hire a relief milker who doesn't have to do much other than milk and open a gate. There are many other examples of how grazing can improve the quality of a farm family's life – just ask any grazier!

If you're reading this, you probably have an interest in grazing, so this may be preaching to the choir. If you don't have an interest in grazing, and you've read this far, I applaud you and hope you can now consider grazing as an option for your family and your farm that has many other qualitative benefits.

We need more grass-based, thriving farms and farm families, not more *dead* farms that are the result of not being willing to change. Regardless of where you are at with grazing, I hope you will pass this article on to people you know who need to GRAZE or DIE.

Karen Hoffman Sullivan is an Animal Scientist and Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Coordinator with USDA-NRCS. She is based in Norwich, NY.

NON-DAIRY LIVESTOCK

Natural Hogs - To Certify or not to Certify?

By Steve Winkler

These are very exciting times in pork production. With increasing customer concerns about food safety and growing demand for food that tastes delicious, markets are popping up for the smaller producer. Your next question is how do you ensure that your customers you have safe food that tastes great, and that your hogs are treated humanely?

The only answer is "Natural" certification from an established, unbiased third party source. You can call yourself natural under the USDA guidelines, but this does not address what the animals are fed, or how they are raised. The USDA guidelines only establish how the meat is processed. A Natural certification label from a third party organization is the only honest way for a producer to guarantee customers food safety, animal husbandry guidelines, and enhanced quality.

There are two agencies that will certify your hogs natural that I am aware of. The Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) and the Animal Humane Association (AHA). When AWI, or AHA certifies you, you separate yourself from organic production, and commercial production.

Not all natural certification programs are the same, but the core values are similar. Most natural certification programs prohibit the use of antibiotics, animal proteins, and hormones. The husbandry practices of your hogs must also be monitored. The clipping of tails and teeth are prohibited, the animals need a minimum square feet per head, deep bedding must be used, and in most cases access to outdoors must be provided. Outdoor access does not have to mean raised on pasture. Outdoor access could be simply a way for the hogs to explore a different area than the barn.

We use a managed pasture rotation on our farm for the finish and growing groups. It helps reduce the feed bill without losing rate of gain. I only use this practice with advisement from a feed company nutritionist that has an approved natural line of feed premixes. We use Keystone Mills natural line of premixes.

Genetics also needs to be considered in natural production. Today's modern genetics are selected for rate of gain and leanness. In natural production you should be selecting for hardiness, marbling or meat quality, disposition, and grazability. The combination of Duroc, Berkshire, and an old fashion line of Chester White have worked very well for our farm. In any case the colored breeds seem to compete and grow better in the natural form of production.

When you produce pork under a natural certified label it cost more to produce, but returns are also greater. Feed, management, fencing, genetics, watering, and marketing are just a few costs that go up. But the price per pound does increase significantly under certified natural pork production, and the returns are not just monetary. The harmonious relationship of animals and land, water quality benefits, increased farm sustainability, better use of underutilized grass land, and keeping old fashion swine breeds in existence all are important issues for enhancing a farm community.

I hope this article gives you an understanding of the importance of a natural certification program. It is not good enough to claim being natural; you need the certification. Align yourself with AWI, or AHA. Involve yourself with a feed company that knows swine nutrition and keeps you updated on the certified natural nutrition guidelines.

The increasing markets that are interested in high quality, safe food are for us all to benefit, the community, the customer, and the farmer. True farm sustainability is out there; hard work and effort will open the door of opportunity. If anyone is interested in involving him or herself with our new New York Certified Natural initiative please call Stephen Winkler at 315-232-5075 or lucki7@gisco.net or call Bill Henning at 585-728-5783 or wrh6@cornell.edu.

Stephen Winkler is owner/operator of Lucki 7 Livestock Company in Rodman, NY. You can reach him at 315-232-5075 or lucki7@gisco.net.

The colored breeds or cross-breeds seem to compete and grow better in natural production systems.

Photo by Steve Winkler

Certified "natural" pork production doesn't necessarily require pasture. But many producers find pasture lowers feed costs and produces a high quality product.

Photo courtesy Kingbird Farm

Resource Spotlight

"Outdoorpig" — A new email discussion group for natural pig producers

For two years Cornell Cooperative Extension Small Farm Specialist Bill Henning has been working with farmers, pork marketers, and Extension colleagues to promote markets for natural pork in the Northeast. "With every step we get a little closer and we've never been closer than we are now," he says. "The trick has been to have enough supply to have something to sell and enough demand to take the supply. Things are looking good."

A new email listserve offers producers the chance to ask questions, share information, sell pigs, look for assistance or anything else related to outdoor, natural, pastured, and/or organic pig production. "OUTDOORPIG" (cce-outdoorpig-l@cornell.edu) is managed by Bernadetter Logozar, Agriculture Development Specialist with Franklin County CCE. She says,"If folks are interested in joining the Outdoorpig listserv they just need to send an email to me at bel7@cornell.edu. Please put "Add me to the Outdoorpig list" in the subject line so we can do so.

If you are thinking about producing pastured pork this year, get in touch with Bill Henning for help in connecting with potential markets. He can be reached at 315-536-5123, 585-233-4167, 585 728 5783 (home phone) or wrh6@cornell.edu.

FOREST AND WOODLOT

Marketing Biodiversity in the Sugarbush

Maple syrup production is a uniquely "green" industry. Producers should capitalize on this by marketing biodiversity as a value-added product of the sugarbush.

By Gary Goff

Maple producers are in the business for more than the money earned. The profit margin just isn't that high! But, benefits and interests are many for those involved. Working outside in the woods is just what many people need and look forward to after a long winter. Working with nature is another attractive aspect.

People in the community also are drawn to some of these attributes of the maple industry. The opportunity for visitors to see and get involved with maple production is a "service" or "attraction" that many producers have recognized and capitalized on. Public tours of the maple operation and visits to the sugar house are important components of the overall operation that many owners enjoy and highlight.

As an example, The NYS Maple Producers Association has promoted "Maple Weekend" across the state. People interested in visiting local maple syrup producers can log onto www.mapleweekend.com and get the listing of hundreds of producers that will be hosting the public at their operation on a specific weekend in March each year. Tens of thousands of people participate in this event annually. Producers sponsor pancake breakfasts, give wagon rides around the farm or sugarbush, demonstrate tapping techniques, show how syrup is made and canned, and of course sell products!

One aspect of maple syrup production that may interest the public is the role that maple production plays in supporting biodiversity. Biodiversity can be defined many ways as it encompasses many ecological phenomena. A brief definition is: "The variety of life, its processes, and its habitat". Biodiversity is more than counting species of plants and animals. It includes how an ecosystem functions and the relationships that exist among all components of the ecosystem; air and water, soil, bacteria and fungi, insects, plants, and animals.

Maple syrup production has the unique distinction of being a fairly large-scale food industry that comes very close to being totally sustainable and nearly benign to the natural landscape that supports it. These traits are at least partially why producers enjoy the work and why consumers enjoy seeing and being involved with syrup production.

Maple syrup is a renewable and natural product that people feel good about producing and consuming! Making the tie to biodiversity is actually very easy and logical to do. It can be the basis by which to demonstrate how maple syrup production comes from working forests that support healthy, natural, functioning forest ecosystems. Very few industries can substantiate such claims!

So, if you are a maple producer, how do you capitalize on the fact that sugarbushes are healthy, functioning forest ecosystems? What specific message do you wish to convey to your customers? How can you make the message interesting and relevant to them? How do you reach them with the message?

There are many possible answers to these questions. How you market biodiversity to your customers needs to fit your overall enterprise. The marketing effort must be relatively easy and inexpensive to develop and present. For many producers it can be accomplished with a minimum of output and be fun and rewarding for you and your customers.

First and foremost, the message needs to be simple, easily understood and fairly brief. No one is going to be captivated or intrigued by long, complicated dissertations on scientific definitions or phenomena. Facts and stats need to be straight-forward and highlight topics that are of interest to the audience, i.e., your buyers, your consumers, your visitors. Which specific points you wish to convey is your choice, but the list should be limited, and a blend and flow of general to specific facts is probably appropriate.

Maple Syrup is an all natural product that producers and consumers can relish!

BIODIVERSITY BENEFITS
Here are some facts and statistics that your biodiversity promotion could include:

Maple sugarbushes are working forests and functioning ecosystems that:
- Provide habitat for a variety of plants and animals. Sugar maple's shaggy and rough bark provides summer roosting and nesting habitat for several bat species including the red bat, silver-haired bat, Indiana bat, and the hoary bat
- Protect watersheds
- Use carbon from the atmosphere to grow trees and store that carbon in wood thereby reducing global warming
- Produce oxygen through photosynthesis
- Produce virtually no erosion and promote soil formation
- Decrease noise and air pollution
- Provide recreational opportunities such as bird watching, cross country skiing, and hunting

Maple syrup is:
- 100% natural
- A naturally renewable food
- Locally produced and distributed
- Not dependent on fossil fuels if evaporators are wood fired

Did you know that sugar maples…???
- Are one of the longest-lived trees in the northeast, reaching an age of 300 to 400 years?
- Due to their long life, large size, and resistance to decay, often provide long-lasting nesting cavities for many birds and mammals such as screech owls, flying squirrels, and raccoons
- Concentrate calcium in their leaves, thereby providing that important nutrient to plants that need high calcium levels, such as ginseng
- Their tall and dense canopies (up to 120 feet) provide unique habitat for many songbirds such as the Eastern wood peewee and ovenbird, and amphibian species such as red-backed salamander, spotted salamander, and wood frog
- Produce frequent, large seed crops nearly 50% of the years and can produce up to 3 million seeds or 450 lbs/acre per year
- Seeds, buds, bark, sap and twigs provide nutritious food for a wide variety of birds and mammals
- Have the unique ability to lift water from deep in the ground and release it through their roots at night, thereby essentially irrigating plants that have shallower root systems

Specific interesting facts about your sugarbush:
People are going to want to know more about your sugarbush and how it contributes to local biodiversity. Maintaining a log or listing of plant and wildlife species that have been seen in your stand can be fun for you to compile and is a good teaching tool for your visitors.

Plants that are commonly found in sugarbushes include:
- Maiden-hair and hay-scented ferns
- Trilliums
- Trout lilies
- Squirrel corn
- Blue cohosh
- Jack-in-the-pulpit

Birds that commonly live in sugarbushes include:
- Eastern wood peewee
- Great-horned and barred owls *(the northern saw-whet owl occurs in the Adirondacks)*
- Wood and hermit thrush
- Ovenbird
- Scarlet tanager
- Yellow-billed and Black-billed cuckoos

Specific management practices that you do in your sugarbush to protect and enhance biodiversity may include:
- Control invasive plants such as Japanese barberry or garlic mustard
- Keep the deer populations under control through hunting to allow better regeneration of tree species and many more species of wild flowers to flourish
- Keep some large downed trees to provide habitat for salamanders
- Keep some large trees with cavities for wildlife to use
- Protect woodland pools (vernal pools) for amphibians

Sugarbushes are great places to find lots of beautiful plants and flowers

MARKETING BIODIVERSITY
There are many ways you can highlight the contributions that your sugarbush makes to biodiversity. If you distribute your own containers, some interesting facts could be included on the jug or bottle. Visitors to your operation can view posters or brochures highlighting the biodiversity in your sugarbush.

A foot path into the sugarbush, going by a variety of unique habitats such as cavity trees, vernal pools, downed logs, and wild flower patches, makes for an interesting nature trail. A trail brochure or signage in the woods works well to highlight specific plants or habitats.

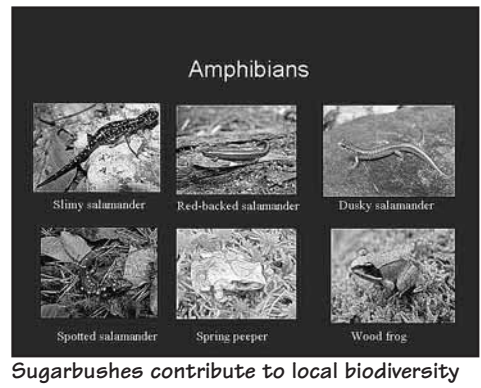
During the off season, it is possible to take your message to the public by offering talks or posters for display at the town library, to clubs and organizations, or to school classes. If you maintain a website, a page on biodiversity can complement your overall sales message.

Digital cameras and computer software photo packages makes putting together attractive posters, presentations, fact sheets, and brochures quite easy for most anyone! Your children, grandchildren, neighbor kids or kids of friends may welcome the opportunity to put together a class project that highlights biodiversity in your sugarbush!

Local nature clubs or youth groups similarly may be interested in projects that can be a learning experience for them. Any group that can come out to your sugarbush through different seasons and over the years, can do a thorough job of cataloguing plant and wildlife species.

Marketing the contributions that sugar maple production makes to biodiversity can be interesting for you and your customers and improve product sales. The maple syrup industry is uniquely "environmentally friendly" and producers should emphasize this fact and capitalize on it. Your local sugarbush is of interest to the public and you can provide the chance for them to learn more about the industry and nature simultaneously. It is a win - win opportunity that helps the local community and helps you turn a profit.

Gary Goff is a Senior Extension Associate in the Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University.



Sugarbushes contribute to local biodiversity by providing habitat for a host of terrestrial amphibian species

Resource Spotlight
Woodland Biodiversity Resources

Peterson Field Guide Series. Guides to trees, flowers, ferns, mushrooms, mammals, amphibians, etc. Available in most libraries and book stores.

http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/BNA.
Life histories of birds in North America

www.unh.edu/ncssf/results-northern-hardwoods.htm.
Information on biodiversity, forest ecosystems, and management of northern hardwoods.

www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/silvics_manual/volume_2/acer/saccharum.htm.
Information on life history and distribution of sugar maple trees.

COMMUNITY/WORLD

Farming the Internet

Email, websites, and listserves are helping this famer stay connected and informed

By Sonja Hedlund

The farm on I live on had a large apple orchid when we moved here. The trees were mostly Northern Spies planted by early residents who probably wanted the pleasure of hard cider and the income from selling apples. In spite of our best care, these trees did not survive. We planted others, medium sized and dwarf but none as delicious as those old Northern Spies. With this old orchard in mind, we call our farm Apple Pond Farm

There is another Apple here on the farm. It sits on my desk. My Macintosh Apple ibook. My skills in using it are mediocre now but growing incrementally. I haven't taken a workshop. I am not very good at reading the 'HELP' sections. When I can't figure out how to do something, I call friends and family members who are Mac addicts or I call the 800 number for AppleCare and get USA based step-by-step technical help.

Using the Internet is making me a better farmer. The Internet connects me with others working in agriculture and gives me access to a vast knowledge base without having to drive anywhere. Through this truly amazing wireless system somewhere out there in the universe, I have had some very satisfying experiences – and over all I am the better for using it.

> "Using the Internet is making me a better farmer."

A few years ago, I got a charming e-mail from Dough. His family, dairy farmers, had a new PC and this nine year old was learning to use it. He had come across our web page, and realized that he lived over the hill from us. He wrote a brief note to me, just two or three lines, that he liked animals. I wrote back, invited him over and he and his family have been friends ever since.

An American living in Wanaka, New Zealand, heard a story on BBC radio about out local public radio station, WJFF, and sent an e-mail to the station manager in praise of its broadcasting. The manager forwarded his note to me, as I was about to go to New Zealand for a vacation. After some back and forth notes, he invited me to visit and I spent the night at his home and had the pleasure of his company on a guided tour of the area the following day.

Before that same trip, web searches located guilds of wool spinners and sheep farms with B & B services. I connected with several that led to delightful farms visits and afternoons chatting with skilled spinners, knitters and felt makers.

We have had over 100 interns here at the farm; most of these came through our farm web page or our listing of web pages for intern opportunities. These are mostly young people wanting to work on an organic farm, to learn to use draft horses for farm work and get experience in raising sheep and goats. Besides American interns, people have come to us from Switzerland, Germany, Norway, Brazil and Japan.

These connections have been a great source of pleasure and friendship as well as assistance in the diverse activities of the farm. There was even a romance between interns who met here. When they married in Norway, we were invited to their traditional wedding; the ceremony was in three languages – Norwegian (the bride), Swiss-German (the groom) and English (the guests). Thanks to e-mail, we keep in touch with all these friends.

> "We have had over 100 interns here at the farm; most of these came through our farm web page."

A young man from Berlin who spent a winter with us helped with lambing and feeding chores. He also organized my computer files, made flyers and designed a new web page. To this day, he does the updates on our web page from Berlin!

The Internet is also important in my farm business. Cornell University has a listserve to help market livestock (*srmarketing-l@cornell.edu*). Over 250 people send and receive information related to buying and selling small ruminants, mostly sheep and goats. Along with their web page, *www.sheepgoatmarketing.info*, these tools help small farmers and buyers connect.

I post questions and get lots of answers based on experience of farmers, veterinarians, working and retired academics. When I started putting out round hay bales weighing over 500 pounds for sheep and goats, I didn't know how to place them so that the animals wouldn't turn them into a playpen and a huge bed. Answers can back: purchase a special sheep/goat round bale feeder; remove a section of fence and put the bale here, pushing it more and more into the paddock as the animals eat it; build your own feeder – photos and plans included and finally (and my choice) encircle the bale in rigid pig fence, those 4 x 18 feet long heavy duty wire panels and cover the bale with a tarp.

Then there was my question about the most nutritious and economical bulk feed ration for my goats and sheep. Here some answers referred me to academic web sites with formulas for the feed mill to follow. Others shared their own recipes, including tips on the frugal purchase of grain.

Friends had a pet goat suddenly die. They were buying a replacement from me. They expressed much regret at the death of this beloved animal that became ill one day and the next day was dead. I posted the animal's symptoms on the listserve. The subject of my note was 'OT: star gazing goat dies.' The OT means 'off topic' as my concern was not about marketing, which is the true focus of this listserve. I got back information from others with similar experience. The country's leading goat heath veterinarian, Dr. Mary Smith, even took the time to respond with essential information.

A goat farmer in Delaware County recently posted another OT item. She described her experience as a volunteer on a goat farm in South Africa. She spent three weeks helping people new to farming learn basic skills. Her photos were sent, too and personal comments about the joy and satisfaction of sharing with others, and learning from them too.

Most days I work a bit at the Mac, writing stories, entering data on my sheep and goats, working with e-mail and reading notes from listserves that I subscribe to. But some days, I simply do not want to type ANOTHER WORD! Yesterday was one of those days. Nothing seemed to work right and I couldn't get any of my e-mail. I gave up.

Tomorrow there will probably be some miracle and things will be back to normal on my Mac. For now, I am off to the barn to play with the kids.

Sonja Hedlund runs Apple Pond Farm and Renewable Energy Education Center in Callicoon Center, NY with partner Dick Riseling. You can learn more at www.applepondfarm.com. This article first appeared in the Towne Crier of Livingston Manor, NY and is reprinted with permission.

FARM FOLLIES

A Tale of Two Forks

By Bill Henning

Robert Frost wrote of a fork in the road and taking the one less traveled. This writing is of a fork in the barn and why it is less used.

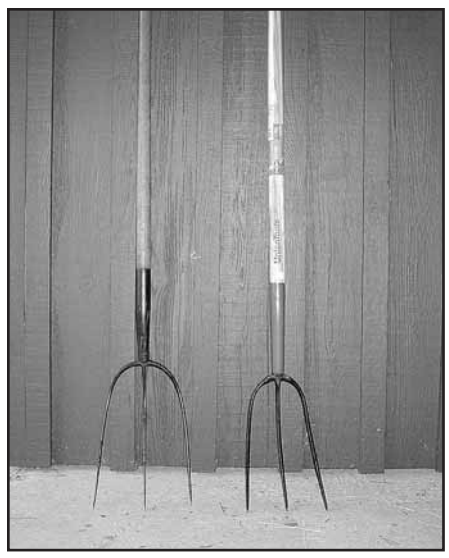
In the last five years our little farm has experienced some 'internal growth' in that we have built one new barn, built three new additions and completely changed the use of another. All this led to the need of an extra fork. Being short on time, my excuse for a lack of common sense, I went to a feed mill — all the local ones are gone — and bought a pitchfork. With my wallet lighter by $35 I proudly went home with my brand new tool.

Several days later my wife and I were bedding down the sheep shed. She had the brand new fork. It only took about a minute before she exclaimed, "Just using this fork is enough to make you want to quit farming!" We promptly traded forks. I promptly agreed with her and went to get another old fork.

We put up straw in round bales. Setting the round bale on end, we simply peel straw off the role and get a well-matted slab to put where we want it. That brand new fork would not penetrate the straw at all once it was peeled off the bale. All this caused me to stop and study the advancements (?) in pitchfork technology.

In any good scientific study we need a 'control', something to compare to. In this case we used a 90-year-old pitchfork my father had bought when he was a young man. If there ever was any identity of the fork's manufacturer, the years have long since removed it. The handle is well made, fine but strong, and worn smooth. The fork head has tines of fine steel, slender with smoothly and roundly tapered distinctive points, points that are sharp. The center tine is symmetrically tapered to the center in the formation of its point, while the outer points taper gracefully toward the outer sides of each tine.

The tines of the old fork are not quite in the alignment they once were. Anyone with much pitchfork experience would fully appreciate that statement. However, the old fork is still a trustworthy servant and can perform the tasks before it just



as well as in its youth. It is full bodied and strong, yet still smooth, having distinctive character; enjoyable, like a fine wine.

On the other hand, our new fork proudly bares the stamp Union Tools ® on its handle and the paper sticker boasts "In Our Third Century Making Quality Tools." The handle on this fork looks acceptable. The fork head is rough steel with thicker tines than our old timer. The points are not points at all. In the last ? inch of length each tine has a two-sided cut tapering toward the center that ends bluntly. The width of the fork head does not approach the width of the old fork so even if you could get some hay or straw on it, it wouldn't hold as much.

The sticker on the handle also states there is a ten year warranty. Of course, if the fork is never used it can't ever break. Ours has just been hanging on the barn wall ever since. I went back to the feed mill, told them the fork didn't work well; I no longer had the receipt and asked if I could return it. They looked at me as if I didn't have the proper operating license.

About a week after my purchase I attended a farm auction. A bundle of old pitchforks sold for $30. Hmmm? What if I consigned that brand new pitchfork?

Bill Henning is Small Farms Specialist with CCE's NWNY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team, and operates a small farm in Livingston County, NY.

COWS & CROPS

Farmer-to-Farmer

Oneida County field crop growers find discussion group provides idea and answers

By Jeff Miller

Farming is time-consuming work, so most farmers don't get to spend much time talking to other farmers. At Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) we recognize the increasing time constraints farmers face, but we also know how much farmers can learn from each other.

CCE of Oneida County has some experience with organizing neighborhood meetings during the summer months with small groups of farmers, to learn about pest management with a "hands-on approach" in participants' fields. In the summer of 2005 a group of six local field crop producers met regularly with Oneida CCE staff as part of an Integrated Pest Management TAg team, with focused discussion on soybean production and pest management in participants' fields. The group enjoyed the summer meetings and expressed an interest in continuing to meet.

That fall, we were successful in obtaining a small grant from the Small Farm Program at Cornell to help start a discussion group. A few members of the group met in November of 2005 at what I called an "Organizational Meeting". I will never use that title again— talk about discouraging participation! But it was enough to get started. We briefly discussed ideas about what topics the group wanted to learn more about during the winter months.

I will say that I expected the group to propose any number of production related topics, but was surprised that the majority were business related topics like financial management, crop insurance options, farm service agency programs, and grain marketing, with some production issues like minimization of tillage and controlling compaction.

CCE staff contacted resource people with expertise in the topics selected by the discussion group, set up a meeting schedule and facilitated the meetings. The group had decided on a question/answer format to foster informal discussion around the focused topic. They also developed a list of other field crop producers in the county that might be interested in joining the group, and asked CCE staff to contact these individuals. Approximately ten growers attended each of the meetings, with most growers attending all of the meetings.

There was active discussion at every one of the meetings. Growers were not shy about asking the burning questions that were on their minds; after all, it was their meeting. Our invited guests were helpful resource people, but the answers to a number of questions actually came from other farmers in the group. At one point, during a discussion of "basis" in our meeting on grain marketing, one of the growers picked up the chalk and wrote an example on the board to help the other growers understand the concept.

I did my best to scribe some notes during the meetings that could be boiled down and put in our newsletters to share with other growers. I also tried to capture the impact that this discussion group was having on the participants' farms. The growers kept to the two-hour format we agreed on for each meeting. Informal discussions flowed out into the hallway and finally into the parking lot, until frosty beards and red, running noses suggested it was time to head home and start the afternoon chores.

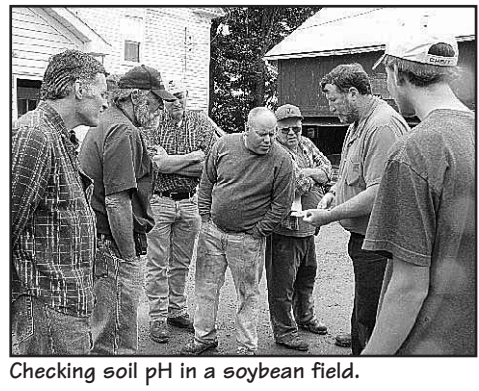
The funds provided by the Small Farm Grant were used to provide a small honorarium to our resource people and cover travel costs where requested. The funds were also used to cover the costs of handouts and publications that were distributed to the growers.

If someone were to ask each of the growers what the benefits were from participation in this discussion group, you might get a different answer from each one. They all participated in the selection of the topics, focusing on what they wanted to learn about, and that was apparent in the level of discussion at each of the meetings. Each person brought their own level of understanding and perspective and shared that with the group.

Evaluations, when completed, showed that growers learned one or more new pieces of information at each of the meetings. Beyond what they learned at the meetings and how it may have had a positive effect on their business, they would probably also agree there was some other immeasurable benefit that they derived from just getting together with each other.

It was a privilege for me to be at those meetings as I learned just as much, if not more, than the growers around the table. The group has already met to develop a list of topics for the winter of 2007. I am looking forward to another winter filled with active discussions and comradery.

Jeff Miller is Extension Issue Leader with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County. If you're looking for ideas on how to start your own discussion group, contact Jeff at 315-736-3394 or jjm14@cornell.edu.



Checking soil pH in a soybean field.
Photographer: Cindy Craven

Checking plant population ina soybean field
Photographer: Cindy Craven

NEW FARMERS

Making It In Farming!

What do you do when friends and family say you can't make it on a small farm?

By Gerard Monnat

What does "making it" really mean? If you look in the dictionary, to "make it" means to rise to rank or dignity, to prosper, to gain, to score. It also means to create, compose, produce or effect. In today's culture, "making it" is synonymous with success, succeeding in life financially and materially. To be successful today means to be prosperous or fortunate, to accomplish something attempted.

For quite some time, when I would share my small farm dream with some people, they would look at me very gravely and say, "you'll never make it doing that" or "you won't make it, others tried it and didn't make it either." When they said those phrases, it used to really shatter my dreams and put doubt into my plans for "making it." They were people I knew, and respected; friends, family members, business people, other farmers. They were all worried that I wouldn't "make it."

Well, I did make it. It took a while, and a bit of work on my part, but not a lot of money. It took faith in my dreams, and in God, but I finally "made it." I made it when I realized what "making it" is really all about.

It is not about having thousands of dollars in a back account, or having the latest model vehicle or piece of big farm equipment, or living in the most modern house heated and lit up by ConEdison, and being fed by Monsanto. It's not about being a political "mover and shaker," or big business tycoon. It's not about socializing with the corporate and political elite, or trying to climb the social ladder.

> "Making it is about the ability to create a lifestyle, a way of life, that rewards you by your modest efforts to accomplish what others say is impossible, absurd, out of fashion, financially stupid, or too much work."

Making it is really about exactly what the dictionary defines it as; the ability to create, fashion, compose, produce, or effect. Making it is all about succeeding in your dream. It is all about gaining peace of mind. It is all about rising to rank, joining the ranks of small family farmers, and dignity; the dignity of working God's good Earth, of treating it respectfully, of farming this land in a dignified manner and being good stewards.

Making it is about breaking out of the materialistic binge that society says everyone needs. It is succeeding in working and living your dream, no matter how small, one day at a time; striving to grow healthier crops and animals. Working to grow healthier mentally, physically, and spiritually.

Making it is about the ability to create a lifestyle, a way of life, that rewards you by your modest efforts to accomplish what others say is impossible, absurd, out of fashion, financially stupid, too much work. It is the ability to not just create, but to do more than that. It is to fashion and compose. It is to be an artist. It is to take your dreams and shape them, paint them in reality, mold them around your daily living.

As you compose this way of life you listen to its melody and harmony; you balance as you can the different tones. You may have to live with a bit of discord now and then; the scenes may have to be repainted a few times to get them right, but you are the artist. You are the composer. You are effecting changes in your lives, and the lives of you loved ones, and your neighbors.

Making it equates with being fortunate, or prosperous. Are you prosperous? Have the gardens provided nourishment, for your family, and possible financial gain to meet those daily needs? What about your livestock, if you have some? Are they also healthy? Have you not also prospered through them? What about your lands and woods? Is this wood stove warming the house, the hay feeding the flocks? Are you not very prosperous?

Working and living the dream of small family farming brings you closer together as a family, closer to the land and the animals you tend, closer to the God you depend on for the sun and the rain. Think of the good effect you have on others in your community that you sell your home grown produce to; of the effect you have on other small farmers you share your dreams with.

Think of the goodness and power of encouragement you give to many who, like you, are struggling to live out their dreams. Yes, sometimes it is a struggle, but so is life. Watch a young calf struggle to get to its feet, or as small seeds struggle to push through the Earth reaching for the warmth of the sun and fresh air. The rewards are with the struggle.

Can someone make it as a small farmer? The answer is a definite YES. Yes they can, Yes you and I can. We can "make it" farming when we consider all the things that are included in the definitions for "making it." Are you struggling to "make it"? Start thinking about whose definition of making it you're trying to live out. Then, next time when someone questions your ability to make it with the small farm dreams, just smile at them and say not only are you "making it," but that you've "made it" in farming your dreams.

As they look at you dumb-founded in disbelief, just remember that "making it" is about a lot of things money can't buy. It's about you and your dreams. Go after them. Make that small farm your dream. Don't let others dissuade you. Realize that you too, can "make it."

Gerard Monnat is a small-scale farmer and writes frequently for Empire State Farmer. This piece is reprinted with permission from the Jan 17, 2007 issue of Empire State Farmer. You can subscribe to ESF by calling 315-232-2141.

Small Farm Quarterly

Youth Pages

The Youth Pages are written by and for young people. Many thanks to 4-H teens participating in state and national 4-H horse activities for supplying most of the material in this issue's Youth Page.

We believe there's a bright future for young farmers in the Northeast. Whether you live on a farm or only wish you did, we'd love to hear from you!

Write to:
SFQ Youth Pages
c/O Celeste Carmichael
4-H Youth Development Program Specialist
CCE State 4-H Youth Development Office
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Respect: The Most Important Factor in Horse Management

By Megan Born, Age 19, Foothills 4-H Saddle Club, Oneida County

Remember saucily sticking out your tongue at that obnoxious kid in preschool? You were letting him know that if your level of respect for him was measured in a thermometer, the mercury wouldn't even be accumulating in the bulb. The most common cause of training and behavior "problems," and one that every horse owner will encounter, is a lack of respect toward the human.

While horses usually don't stick their tongues out, their ways of showing disrespect may be seemingly harmless at first, but quickly escalate. According to ***The Horse***, 2nd edition, by Evans, Borton, et. al, "…an understanding of horse behavior is essential to effective management." Whether you have only one horse or a herd, a basic understanding of horse behavior is necessary.

To be better equipped to recognize and prevent disrespect in the equine, let me first illustrate a common scenario, identify the ways horses show disrespect, and offer advice to prevent and remedy respect problems.

Here is the scenario: Kate had horse fever, so her parents bought her Pepper: a bombproof horse with tons of miles. Kate did everything with him: long walks with Pepper in the lead, and games of tag in the pasture (Pepper was always "it"). Kate was so proud of Pepper, she loved to show off to her friends how he would give her "that cute nasty face" and shove her out of the way at feeding time.

One day while playing tag, Pepper almost galloped over the top of Kate and when she sidestepped, he turned and kicked her. Kate was confused. She loves her horse, why would he suddenly act like that? The truth is that her horse was showing her disrespect, a behavior that often starts out subtly and gradually gets worse over time.

Ponies have a tendency to be especially dominant and territorial. This child is assertively asking her pony to move away from her which puts her in the position of herd authority

How does a horse show disrespect? You may have seen it. The dominant or "alpha" horse in the herd gets many privileges (all imposed by himself) including: choice of best forage, the first in line while traveling, personal space; and power over subordinates just by using body language. The horse that does challenge him receives a kick, bite, strike, or chase.

Horses don't verbalize, therefore they are very observant and utilize inferred signals to reap immediate results. If the non-verbal language were directed toward the owner, it likely goes unnoticed. Examples of non-contact warnings include pinning his ears, swinging his head, curling his lip, lifting a hind leg, turning his rump toward the opponent, etc.

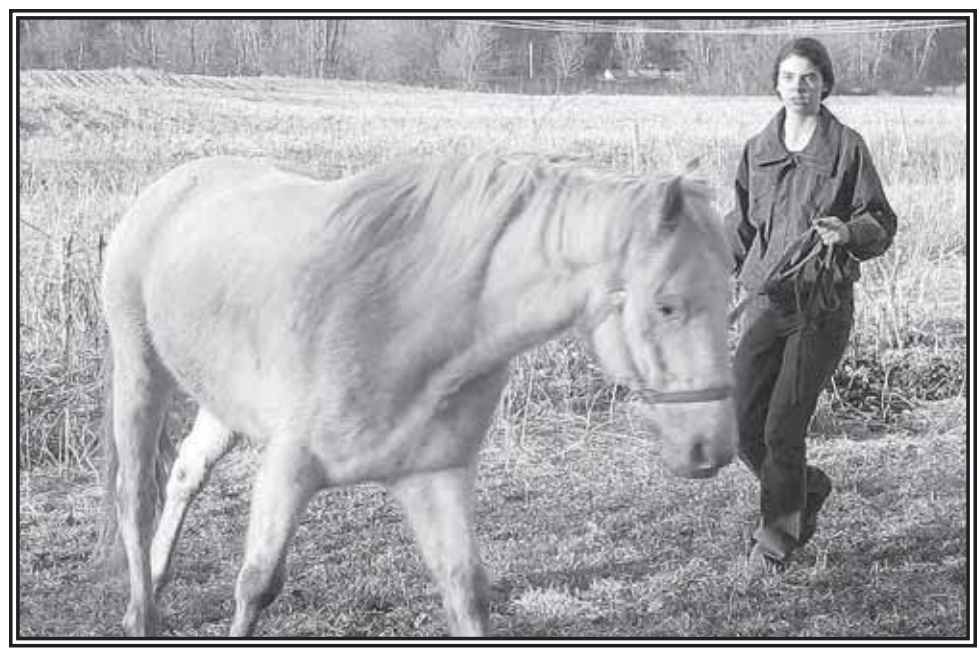
Horses lower in the pecking order wouldn't think of biting, pushing, or kicking their alpha- they respect him! So if your horse is kicking or biting at you, this is a sure sign of who's who on the totem pole – at least to your horse.

So what's the solution? If your horse is already exhibiting dangerous behavior, you should get a professional you trust involved. For a horse that is still testing the waters, or to prevent disrespect problems, one of the simplest things you can do is back the horse up. Getting your horse to move his feet where you want him to (back up, sidepass, turn on the forehand, turn on the hindquarters) puts you in a position of authority. If your horse takes a step toward you and you back away, you have just told him he is in charge.

Author Megan Born demonstrates correct leading: "In the horse world, the one who is in front is the one who is in charge of the herd." - Ginny Self Bucklin

When you lead your horse, make sure part of you is always in front of the horse. Some recommend standing by the throatlatch and holding your lead hand out in front of the horse's nose when leading. Other trainers suggest giving the horse a rap on the nose if he goes to pass you. If your horse gets protective of his hay or grain, simply lowering your head, swinging it, and taking a step toward his head and shoulder may be enough to reestablish your position.

Teaching your horse to lower his head on command lets you put him in a submissive frame, and this will help the attitude to follow. Never allow him to present his tail to you when you enter the stall, teach your horse to face you. And, when you lunge, always keep your horse's focus on you. Instruct other people interacting with your horse to never encourage the horse to chase them, even in fun.



When you lunge, expect and demand your horse's attention and obedience. Trigger's left ear is turned toward Megan; which means he is focusing and ready to obey the next command

In the horse's mind, either you are the leader, or he is; and horses establish this through aggressive and assertive actions. Commanding your horse's feet and focus is a practical step on the road to respect. Taking time to train your horse and getting education and help from knowledgeable people will go a long way to safe, rewarding horse ownership.

For more information on horse behavior I recommend ***The Horse,*** 2nd edition by Evans, Borton, et al. and ***The Horse Behavior Problem Solver*** by Jessica Jahiel.

Some Friends, Some Horses, and a Lot of Mud

Amy Lack, Age 17, Stable Minds 4-H Club, Monroe County

Horse shows are a standard summer family affair for many youth who belong to the 4-H horse program, accounting for many late Friday nights at the barn and early Saturday morning drives to shows with an 8am start time. From there it is a buzz of activity as trainers and family help to prepare for a day spent in the hot sun. However, there is one show that differs very much from the normal, it is the Intercounty Horse competition, a statewide competition held each October and hosted by Chemung County.

This 3 day event is a team competition, with 5 members on each team: 2 seniors (14-19 years old), 2 juniors (9-14 years old) and a barn manager (14-19 years old). Teams are judged on their barn management skills, knowledge of horses, and riding skills. Each team is given six stalls - four for horses, one for a tack room, and the last as a hospitality room. This last stall is usually carpeted and furnished with an old couch, folding chairs, and table - all provided by the team.

Many teams also choose to decorate their stalls with a particular theme and have a team name that reflects this theme. Decorations range from homemade curtains and stall fronts to lights and blow-up palm trees. The hospitality room also houses any food or drinks and most years a portable heater.

The show is held rain or shine over Columbus Day weekend. More often than not, the weather is cold and rainy. Arrival at the Chemung County Fairgrounds is on Friday, giving teams plenty of time to set up before the competition begins Saturday morning. The really unique part of this show is not the teams or the requirement of riders to ride in multiple disciplines, or even the knowledge and barn management aspects, but the ban on adult/parental help starting Saturday morning. From that point on teams must work together and adults become silent spectators. In fact - communication with an adult who is not a show official is grounds for disqualification.

As the competition unfolds it becomes the team members' responsibility to report at specified times for different aspects of the competition. All teams must report for a formal inspection and team problem. The formal inspection is the equivalent of a halter class with judging based on cleanliness of your horse, your appearance, and you and your horses' ability to execute a brief pattern.

The team problem is basically a mini presentation on a problem given to the team upon their arrival at their appointed time. Ten minutes are given to prepare and another ten minutes to present. During the presentation every member is expected to contribute equally. Scores are given based on organization, accuracy and thoroughness of material presented.

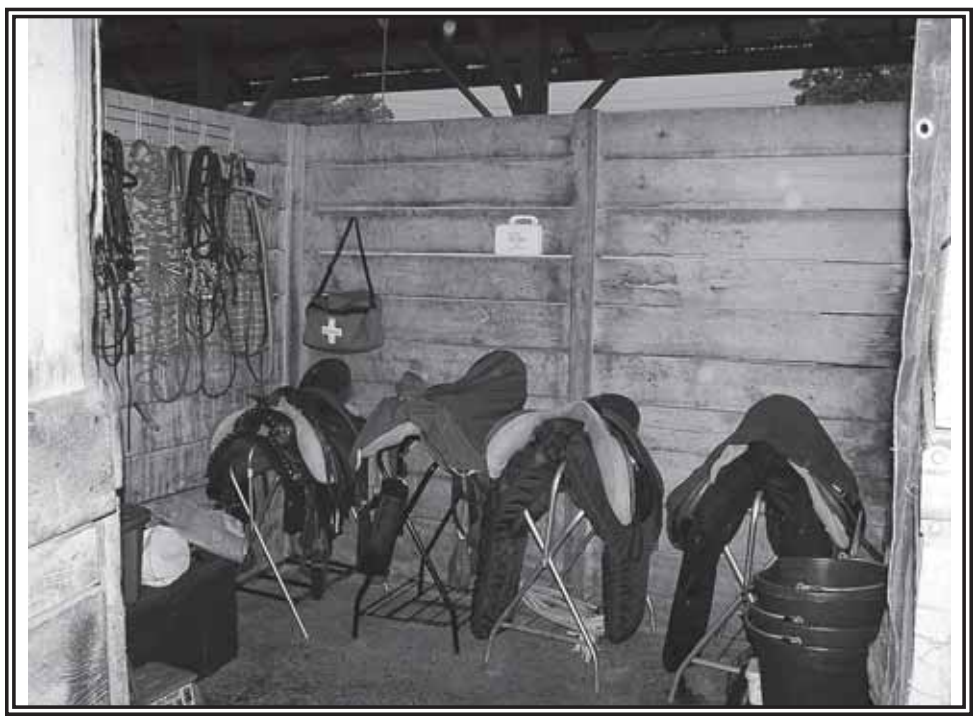
Since this is a team competition, riders are encouraged to compete in classes ranging from jumping to trail to dressage and western pleasure. Points are awarded just for participation.

Although it may seem like teams are constantly kept on the run there is some down time for teams to relax in their hospitality rooms and, usually, try to stay warm and dry! The best part of this competition is the camaraderie that develops. For a team to do well, everyone must be willing to help out their team members. However, it is not just about winning; it is about having fun while working toward a common goal - survival!

Although this competition is a great learning experience, a word of caution: it is not for the faint of heart! Be prepared for a lot of fun, cold, rain, mud, horses and great memories.

For more information visit: *http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/chemung.*

Each team competing in the Intercounty Horse Competition sets up a "hospitality room" in one of their assigned stalls



Tack room at the Intercounty Horse Competition hosted by Chemung County

My Life as a Horseless Horse Lover

By Sarah Moylan, Age 16 years, Caps 'N' Champs 4-H Club, Albany County

Ever since I started riding at the age of six, my life has revolved around everything horse-related. Whenever I tell people that I love horses, they automatically ask, "So what kind of horse do you own?" I usually shock them by saying, "Well, actually, I don't own a horse. I don't even lease a horse."

The truth is that while many, if not most, horse-crazy teenagers like me do indeed own their own horses, there are also a large number who do not. There is no doubt that I would love to have a horse to call my own, but the combined costs of feed, board, and vet care are just too steep for me and my family. Through the years, though, I have learned that it is not difficult to be involved in the horse world without actually owning a horse.

So, I have come to see opportunity in what others see as obligation. Some horse owners who stable their horses at the barn only have time to ride. I began working at the barn a few days a week and learned all of the essentials: grooming, mucking stalls, tacking up, bathing, feeding, and of course, riding. Now, on weekends, I teach those skills to kids younger than myself at the barn.

I've also learned to accentuate the positives of non-ownership. Since I don't have my own horse to ride, I ride a different horse in my lesson almost every week. I am one of the few people who has ridden just about every lesson horse at our barn, and it definitely keeps my skills sharp.

Working with Tequila, one of the lesson horses.

I participate in 4-H educational activities like Horse Bowl, Horse Judging, Horse Communications, and Hippology. They have given me a chance to not only show off the skills I have learned at the barn, but to compete with and get to know other horse crazy kids. The educational competitions, are probably my favorite activities in 4-H. I have competed at the county, regional, state, and national levels of educational competitions, and I can not even begin to count the number of great people I have met at competitions all over the country.

Not owning a horse also allows me to have more free time. I don't need to be at the barn a few hours every day, seven days a week. This gives me a chance to concentrate on the things that come first - like school and family.

Sarah shedding Orion, a lesson pony at the barn

All that said, I really hope I have the opportunity to own a horse someday – in fact, I would like to own a lot of horses! But for now, I am having a lot of fun making the most out of not owning a horse!

For more information on 4-H Horse Educational Activities, check out *www.ansci.cornell.edu/4H/horses.*

Resource Spotlight

NCAT Opens New ATTRA Office for Northeast

As energy costs, urban sprawl, and diet-related health issues become more problematic, sustainable low-input solutions to the complex questions of energy use, community building, and agriculture are ever more important.

The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) has been helping to develop appropriate and sustainable technologies and improve the lives of low-income families since 1976. NCAT is a non-profit organization that serves economically disadvantaged communities. Its focus is making low-input, small-scale, locally-based technologies available through outreach, publications, and technical assistance.

In order to bring its programming closer to clients, and to develop collaborations with other organizations in the Northeast, NCAT recently opened a regional field office in northeastern Pennsylvania. The office will serve rural and urban communities in the mid-Atlantic and Northeastern US through technical services and community and agricultural development projects.

NCAT's largest and most popular project is ATTRA – The National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service. ATTRA is funded by a grant from the USDA-Rural Business Cooperative Service. Through the ATTRA project, NCAT serves farmers, ranchers, Cooperative Extension educators and others interested in reducing chemical inputs, conserving soils and water, and/or diversifying their agriculture operations.

TOLL-FREE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
The ATTRA project is best known for one-on-one technical assistance through its toll-free phone number — **800-346-9140**. Many ATTRA clients say the most important aspect of the ATTRA project is that they can call the toll-free number and speak to a "real person" knowledgeable in sustainable agriculture. Often technical questions can be answered right on the phone. For more involved requests, technical specialists will provide a personalized, researched response by mail or email.

ATTRA is also known for its collection of over 300 technical publications, which are researched, written, published, and disseminated by a staff of agricultural specialists located throughout the country. These are all available free by mail or on the ATTRA website, *www.attra.ncat.org.*

The diversity of topics covered by ATTRA publications have a common theme; they are all written to address the needs of farmers and ranchers who seek to implement low-input, sustainable production technologies that will foster social, economic, and ecological health. At the root of all ATTRA publications is the understanding that healthy communities begin with healthy soil; and low-input, ecological farming methods can build soils that are capable of supporting a thriving, diverse population of healthy crops and livestock that in turn feed people.

EXPERIENCED SPECIALISTS
NCAT Program Specialists working on the ATTRA project come from diverse backgrounds, but most are or have been farmers or ranchers at one time. Some have experience as Cooperative Extension agents, some as researchers, and some as educators. Their areas of specialization are reflected in the topic areas on the ATTRA website, and include horticultural crops, field crops, livestock, farm energy, and organic certification, among others.

Whether you are a backyard gardener, small-scale market farmer, dairy farmer, or large-scale commodity producer, ATTRA is tailored to answer your questions and provide you with up-to date resources designed to be both user-friendly as well as technically comprehensive.

HOW TO CONTACT US
There are currently two of us serving as specialists in NCAT's new Northeast regional field office. Lee Rinehart, Livestock Program Specialist, can be emailed at *lee@ncat.org.* Andy Pressman, Agronomy Program Specialist, can be emailed at *andyp@ncat.org.* You can also call or write to us at:

National Center for Appropriate Technology
48 Church Road
Shavertown, PA 18708
570-696-6786

You can call the toll-free ATTRA phone number anytime Monday through Friday from 8 AM until 8 PM Eastern Standard Time. The number is 800-346-9140. The service is also available in Spanish from 8 AM to 5 PM Pacific Time by calling 800-411-3222.

You can write to the national office at:
ATTRA -National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service
P.O. Box 3657
Fayetteville, AR 72702

On the web. All ATTRA publications are provided free of charge and are accessible from the ATTRA website at *www.attra.ncat.org.* For email users, the ATTRA website includes a feature called "Ask a Sustainable Agriculture Expert," located at *www.attra.ncat.org/ask.php.* Merely fill out the online form and submit it according to the directions on the page.

You will receive a tailored response from an ATTRA program specialist as soon as possible, sent via U.S. mail (if printed publications are included) or e-mail. Response time varies depending on the nature and complexity of your question.

NCAT Program Specialist Tammy Hinman

STEWARDSHIP & NATURE

Agricultural Environmental Management

AEM's simple worksheets can help you reduce environmental risks

By Barbara Silvestri

In the last issue, we introduced New York State's Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program and the benefits it offers to small farms. Conducting a confidential AEM Risk Assessment is a quick and easy way to take a comprehensive look at your farm's impact on natural resources and acquire information for long-term business planning. The assessment can help you document your environmental stewardship, prioritize areas presenting risk, identify opportunities to save money, and locate available local, state and federal resources to address potential concerns.

You can schedule a free, confidential AEM Risk Assessment with your County Soil and Water Conservation District. The first step will be completing an AEM Questionnaire and the AEM Watershed Site Evaluation Worksheet with the help of conservation agency staff. The Watershed Site Evaluation Worksheet looks at your farm's specific location and site characteristics to determine which of the AEM Worksheets should be completed in order to focus on the water quality issues that are a priority for your farm.

Virtually identical farm operations in different locations might have entirely different environmental concerns. Perhaps your farmland drains to a stream with high sediment levels, or into a lake used as a drinking water supply where pathogens such as Giardia or Cryptosporidium are a concern. Perhaps it sits above an underground aquifer that already has elevated nitrogen levels. In each case, the assessment is tailored to focus on issues and opportunities important to your farm, and minimize the farm's impact on water quality.

The following are some of the AEM 'Core' Worksheets that often benefit small farms.

Manure Management. This worksheet looks at practices to maximize the benefits of manure as a crop nutrient source and soil conditioner, while minimizing the risk of pathogens, nutrients and organic material entering waterbodies or contaminating water supplies. The worksheet also considers maintaining good neighbor relations and avoiding odor complaints.

Farmstead Water Supply. Determine if your water supply or neighboring wells are at risk for contamination. This worksheet evaluates how safe your well is from being impacted by your farm activities.

Barnyards. Properly managing the concentrated nutrients in the barnyard reduces pollution risks, minimizes odor complaints and promotes livestock health. This worksheet addresses barnyard runoff and keeping clean water clean by diverting it away from the barnyard and other heavy use areas.

Stream and Floodplain Management. Protecting stream corridors not only improves habitat for fish and wildlife but also clearly demonstrates your concern for the environment to your community. This worksheet documents your efforts to protect nearby waters and identifies the many sources of funding available to promote stream health.

Pasture Management. Let your cows do the work! Well managed pasture can produce a high quality feed that can be very cost effective. This worksheet examines planning and management decisions that promote quality feed production, reduce production costs, prevent soil erosion and the risk of water quality degradation, while enhancing wildlife habitat.

Soil Management. Preventing erosion and enhancing soil quality makes good economic and environmental sense. This worksheet can help you determine if you have excessive erosion which can reduce yields, degrade your soil resources, and increase potential water pollution.

Other worksheet topics include Petroleum Products Storage and Livestock Odor Management. There is also and Agriculture and the Community Worksheet, which addresses neighbor relations and can help add up the benefits that your farm provides to your community. In addition to these Core Worksheets, there are specific worksheets tailored to Dairies, Greenhouse Operations, Vineyards and Horse Farms. All the AEM Worksheets are available on the web at *www.nys-soilandwater.org/aem/techtools.html.*

If you farm in New York and would like to schedule a free, confidential AEM Risk Assessment for your farm, contact your County Soil and Water Conservation District. For contact information, visit *www.nys-soilandwater.org*. Watch future issues for overviews of AEM Worksheets of particular interest to small farms!

Barbara Silvestri is information & Education Program Coordinator with the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee. She can be reached at 518-457-3186 or barbsilvestri@agmkt.state.ny.us.

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Subscribe to the Small Farms Update, a monthly email newsletter with announcements, upcoming events, resources, funding and farming opportunities and more.

Send an email to Laura Harthan at lbh25@cornell.edu.

Please provide your name, farm name, postal address, and county.

Among the first farmers in the state to participate in New York's Agricultural Environmental Management program, the Arnold family now operates a 140 cow organic dairy with 250 head of cattle on nearly 700 acres. The Arnold's have been working with the Cortland County Soil and Water Conservaton DIstrict for years, implementing everything from strip cropping and diversions ditches for erosion control , to projects strictly geared to protect water quality. They are innovators and leaders in applying new technology and exploring non-traditional techniques to further their conservation goals. The Arnold's Twin Oaks Dairy and the Cortland County Soul and Water Conservation District were the recipients of the 2006 Agricultural Environmental Management Award honoring their exceptional stewardship efforts.

Photo courtesy of American Agriculturist Magazine.

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